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MARY EAGLESTONE'S LOVER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'RUTH BAYNARD'S STORY,' &c.



EAGLESTONE MANOR.

CHAPTER I.

TWO OXFORD MEN.

THE College of St. Isidore, in the University of Oxford—a College which, as everybody knows, has been renowned for first-class men, fast men, boat-at-the-head-of-the-

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river, and Dernier's theological prize essay,—was in the full enjoyment of all these honours at the moment of which I am going to speak.

I shall not put down the year:

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you would go and look in the University Calendar, and make all manner of searches. But that shall not be. You shall see how a story-teller can respect the 'sanctities of domestic life' when he chooses to do so. And being in this most excellent frame of mind, I invite you, good reader, to stand with me in the grand old quad of St. Isidore—in imagination of course—on a sunny day, in a year now past, in fact, in the year eighteen hundred and—inflexibly blank.

I shall not keep you long; only long enough to become acquainted with the exterior of two Oxford men.

A June morning was just becoming mid-day—for the gilt hands of an honest clock of most brazen and unabashed countenance were within five minutes of the prick of noon—when two men met in St. Isidore's quad, and stopped to speak to each other. They were both a little over twenty. One was tall and athletic, with bright chestnut hair; perhaps few people ever showed at that age more perfect manliness. The other was also tall, but he was of slim make; not ill made nor weakly, but you would not have used the word *athletic* in speaking of him; and no other word would have described his friend. The slim man had very dark hair, and what people called a Spanish complexion; but he was a thorough Englishman, in spite of his slightly foreign look, very handsome, and very clever. He was the son of the Dean of Redchester, and stood rather alone in the family circle; first, because he was the only son in a family of six; and secondly, because he was said by everybody to take after his mother, who had lived a delicate, dark, intellectual beauty, till she was twenty-eight, and then died in consequence of a carriage accident, when her youngest girl was only two months old. The five girls were all fair and rosy, and like their father; Harvey Falkland—the mother's own child—as the dean would say, with a holy moisture making his blue eyes bright—was as like that mother as a strong man can be like a woman who was all gentleness and love. Harvey Falk-

land and the dean his father were great friends, with always a touch of tenderness on their friendship. There was something uncommon in their position towards each other—something, also, uncommon in their mutual feelings. They were so utterly different. The dean was a strong man, and a good scholar; Harvey was something more than a good scholar. They could have made—and they did make—equally good Latin verses; but when the dean read his son's he found more than scholarship in them; he felt the *afflatus* of the poet, and once more the blue eyes grew bright, and the old words were whispered—the mother's own child!

So, at the deanery at Redchester, life was pleasant enough. The eldest daughter, Mrs. Mordaunt, had been left a widow at thirty, after four years of matrimony, and she lived at home, and took care of the house in a very perfect way; Ellen was with her husband, Captain Graham, in India, and enlivened Redchester with bright letters, telling of a successful career. Jane was the wife of a clergyman in the country, and lived about twenty miles distant; Sarah was unmarried, twenty-two years of age, and her father's librarian and secretary; Harvey, our hero, you have left talking to his friend in St. Isidore's quad: and Isabel, the youngest, was eighteen, and still supposed to be in the school-room—that is, she gossiped in German, at stated intervals, as much as she pleased, with Fraulein Klopsack, an irreproachable gentlewoman who had become 'just like one of the family.' This is enough to say, introductory to Harvey Falkland: we will now add that the man he is talking to in the sunny quad is Matthew Eaglestone.

It was a lazy day; somehow, there are a good many in that term at Oxford: they have both just come out of lecture, one in one quad and the other in the other.

'Well,' said Harvey Falkland; 'very hot to-day.'

'Nice breeze, though,' said Eaglestone.

'Are you going on the river?' asked Falkland.

'No. Suppose we have a ride this afternoon.'

'Done! Come to my rooms and lunch: we'll send and order our horses, and start directly after.'

By-and-by, as soon as luncheon was over, a scout, having been persuaded by special good luck to take an order direct to the livery stables, they got on horseback for their ride in the yard of that excellent individual to whom chiefly the men of St. Isidore were indebted for their horse exercise. I shall not divulge his name—a name infinitely well known. I am again going to sacrifice to our domestic sanctities, lest you should, knowing the name of the horse-dealer, be able, after fitting search, to supply the true names of all other persons mentioned in this honest and voracious history. It is enough to say they were very well mounted. I may also say that both of these men could ride. It was a part of Matthew Eaglestone's character to ride: with him to sit a horse as a man should, and to have him in absolute control, was like a thing born with him—the whole performance was a matter of course. With Harvey Falkland, riding was more of an accomplishment, and there was to him an exquisite luxury in it. Perhaps Falkland enjoyed all enjoyable things in a keener way than Eaglestone did. He felt the air, and enjoyed the summer atmosphere, and recognized the scent of flowers, and knew more of the many things that make up the grand whole of happy hours than his friend knew. One felt life in detail, with enhanced suffering, or multiplied enjoyment, as the case might be; the other took the blessing or the blow, and never thought of triumph or trial but as the one thing that it was when it came. With Eaglestone, the events of life would only make him older, as in the natural order of things: his wounds would heal; his hopes and joys would pass, and leave his spirit free for the equally glad reception of others. But with Harvey Falkland, every blow, though the injury might heal healthily, would leave a scar; every hope lost would leave him more and more a mourner.

It was not that one was hard to unfeelingness, or that the other felt to weakness. It was that they had different dispositions; that both were strong, and that each showed his strength in his own way.

Before the railway was opened, which, you know, is a recent affair, and in the time of a late Duke of Marlborough, the park at Woodstock was of pretty easy access to all Oxford men, as plenty will testify.

There used to be an old porter at the gateway—that gateway at the end of the little town of Woodstock, built by Sarah Duchess of Marlborough near the site of Geoffrey Chaucer's house, who mostly let you in on the application of the usual means, and you were sometimes met, and sometimes you were not met, by a mounted keeper. If you were not met, so much the better, and you rode or drove through the park, and went to the ranger's lodge and saw how the stock of Blenheim spaniels went on, and examined the room and the bed in which Rochester died, with all convenience, and any amount of edification you thought proper.

Some such ideas of a ride were in our two friends' heads as they passed leisurely and merrily along the road by Yarntow, Begbroke, and the long bit of cantering turf before you get into Woodstock. The archway of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough and the porter of the reigning duke received them and their contributions. They thought themselves happy in finding no mounted keeper in sight, trotted briskly up the beautiful way in front of the palace, then turned over the bridge, so provocative of epigram, and got upon the turf behind the great Marlborough pillar and between those squadrons of trees which commemorate the arrangement of the troops in the great duke's great action.

'And a precious rogue he was,' said Falkland, 'in spite of all that marble says there,' pointing to the marble history at the base of the column.

'I wonder which king he really wished to have, after all!'

'The man who paid best, most likely,' said Harvey. 'But I am particularly obliged to him for this park. Here's a splendid mile, from here to the Charlbury gates. I wonder whether the great duke ever rode his charger here. Not that that matters much to him or me now. Let us get on a little faster in this charming breeze.'

So they went off in an idle canter. If you were an Oxford man at a certain period, you very likely did the same thing, one day or more, and you will recollect a little broken ground on your left-hand side as you go up that magnificent avenue to the Charlbury gates.

A little broken ground! Many times in the life that was then in store for Harvey Falkland he saw such bits of broken ground, and then a recollection of the day, the ride, the great avenue, the friend by his side, the thought in his heart, and finally the words on his lips, would rush to his recollection, and make his heart shake within him. All of us, whether readers or writers, who are old enough, know what this means; but few of us, I hope, will ever know how keen a pang the memory of the moment when he first spoke what he long had felt brought to Harvey. The words were not many. They had had their canter, they were giving themselves and their horses the luxurious rest of a quiet progress in a glorious shade, and then Harvey said, 'Eaglestone, if I go on as I suppose I shall, here, at St Isidore, do you think your cousin Mary would marry me? I love her with all my soul.' To which Harvey received in reply these words, 'Bless my heart! I'd no notion of it. Of course; that is, my dear Harvey, I hope so; she'd be a fool if she didn't.'

Harvey Falkland gave a low, happy, triumphant little cheer; and in the happiness of the moment they put their horses to their best speed and laughed aloud with honest glee, like those who conquer life.

CHAPTER II.

THE EAGLESTONES OF EAGLESTONE.

Eaglestone Manor! People who dip into such matters tell us that the word manor comes from the Latin word which means to remain. And, indeed, manors did remain in times past rather more than they have done of late years. And they stuck fast to names too; and names, come from them, stuck fast to manors.

A good many have escaped the great upheaving and sinking which has long gone on in what is called society in this island. Here we are at the door of one of them!

Eaglestone manor-house stands at the top of a pleasant eminence, on a little table-land of its own. Any further information in detail we inexorably withhold. We can only add the fact of its being three miles from the city of Redchester, where the good gentleman, Dean Falkland, lived. This abstinence from further instruction will not matter to the reader. If he or she should ever stand in the valley and look towards that eminence where the manor-house seats itself so pleasantly, it will be a sight such as England gives to the beholder, and no other country on the face of this earth can show.

There it stands—no, sits; low, spread out, two stories high, seven gables in front, and a porch in the wall of the middle gable. Such is the front view. The back view is a delicious entanglement of architectural irregularities: here a small gable, there a big one; high windows, low windows, transomed and not transomed; with a good courtyard, and a fine stone 'helping stock'—that is, four good steps by which ladies mounted high horses in the days of our ancestors, when madam got into her pillion behind honest, belted John.

Nobody at this moment on this earth has the least idea why the manor is called Eaglestone. No human being in the neighbourhood ever saw an eagle without paying for the sight in a proper holiday-seeker's way. But there the name is, and all that can be said in expla-

nation amounts to the fact that seven hundred years ago a Sir Wilfrid Eaglestone was in possession of it. A descendant of his has already become known to my readers; but whether his ancestor gave name to the place, or whether the place gave name to his ancestor, no one can declare. But the descent had not been perfect in the male line. Our friend, Matthew Eaglestone's grandfather, had taken the name.

John Pynke, Master of Arts, sometime Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, Squire, Lord of the Manor of Eaglestone, one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, and also a Deputy Lieutenant, resided in the last century at Eaglestone, having married the heiress. John Pynke, descended from a good old stock in the same county, married the daughter, and sole heir, and, to use Sir Bernard Burke's expressive formula, 'became of Eaglestone.' The marriage was blessed by two sons; the elder, Matthew, at the date of this story commonly called the old squire; and the younger, Tom, at the same date, commonly called the old parson. The squire had only one child, our friend at St. Isidore's. The old man and a few servants lived very quietly, seldom seeing any one but his brother, who lived at the parsonage at the foot of the hill, and close to the village and the church.

These two brothers had lived at Eaglestone together till they were respectively forty-eight and fifty years of age. Tom had been the clergyman of the parish for many years. All sorts of good works flowed steadily down the hill to the villagers in the vale below, and no one had any cause to wish them married, though why they were not linked to good wives, and other matrimonial blessings, was wondered over freely. The truth was that they were not men given to change. At Eaglestone these brothers had been born, and there they had lived. They were not going to hurry fate, or to go forth out of Eaglestone to invite their destiny to their arms, like other men who are not content to let things alone. The Eaglestone brothers did let things

alone, and were none the worse for it.

A day came when the tenant of the parsonage gave notice to go. It suddenly occurred to Tom that the parsonage might be filled as other parsonages were; and while taking a sort of general view of this idea, he walked down the hill to receive his rent from Mrs. Farebrother, and bid her good-bye. He saw the lady, and he saw two nieces who had come to help in the labours attending on departure. He found that they had taken rooms in the village inn for a month, by which time Mrs. Farebrother's new home would be ready for her—it was a cottage on a small property about ten miles off, which had lately been left to her by a relative. The entrance of these ladies into the lives of the bachelor brothers was thus secured; and at the end of the month Mary Farebrother was engaged to Tom Eaglestone, and Ellen, her sister, to the squire. The girls were young, good, and pretty, but not strong. The squire led a happy life with a happy woman for fifteen years, when she died, leaving an only son: her sister at the parsonage had died ten years before her, leaving a daughter, Mary.

Since his wife's death the squire had led a very lonely life. Matthew, when at home from school or college, had always filled the dear old house with noise, bustle, and mirth, and his old father enjoyed the fun heartily. But when Matthew was gone, it was always again silence—such a strange stillness, people thought; such a trying contrast to the life that Matthew invariably brought home with him. His gun and his garden, when 'the boy' was away—'Quite enough for me,' he used to say. But it was hard to believe that the man who, old as he was, could go across country on his well-bred hunter with all the zeal of the days of his youth, should really not be weary of the days when he was so utterly alone.

Matthew had spoken to his father of this, and had pressed him to go among his friends.

'I can't, my boy; I like loneliness best. I should not have felt

as I do if Tom had not married again.'

And so one night, in those few words, the secret dropped out.

'If I went to friends, I should have to go there—go to the parsonage, Mat. I couldn't do it, my boy. He shouldn't have married again; and so soon, too; and such a woman! Why, I used to think Lady Mary looked down on my angel. When first I was left alone, I used to go to the gate in the dusk of the evening, and make myself go in. It took half an hour or more, sometimes. Then I would go in—go in straight, as I had been used to do when we had a sister there. Well, she didn't like it, Mat. And then she would be drilling that poor child—a beautiful little thing she is, too; and when she wanted to vex me once, she said, "Mary has been inattentive, and she is condemned to talk French till bed time." So I answered, "The child shall talk as I please when she talks to me, and I should not understand her in any language but my own." Ah, Mat, I suffered a good deal for the sake of little Mary, my niece by a double right; but Tom was never very strong, you know. He had the beauty, but the power was mine. My lady rules him, Mat.' And the old squire laughed softly.

From that time Matthew never pressed his father to go among his neighbours; but he spent all the time that was his own in the old house, and he got Mary there, a beautiful girl of eighteen, and the dean and his daughters would come to stay, and Lady Mary would grace the old house very willingly, and be well enough pleased to do so, bringing an odd little girl, her own child, with her.

This odd little dark-faced fairy was a grievance to the old squire; you see he was willing to make himself grievances in connection with Lady Mary, and this particular grievance lay in the fact of the child being called Marietta, as if her mother could not have called her Martha, or Mildred, or any other name, common or grand, beginning with M, instead of Marietta, the Italian version of Mary. 'Why,

she grudges the poor child her name,' the squire would exclaim, when he was poevishly inclined. But the squire was not perfectly just to Lady Mary.

When Mary Eaglestone was eighteen her half-sister was just ten. She was so small as to look not more than seven; but she was a bright, dark-complexioned little being, as strong and as agile as a young goat, and of a superhuman cleverness. It was almost uncanny to find this little creature speaking three languages, playing, singing, dancing, and making herself agreeable to her elders with an air of the most amusing patronage. No one was more amused than the beautiful elder sister with the perfect features and large dreamy brown eyes and luxuriant chestnut hair; no one loved this child better than Mary loved her, and the dark fairy was devoted to the protecting friend that her sister was always found to be. Marietta saw and understood most of the situations around her. She knew that Harvey Falkland loved Mary quite as soon as Mary knew it herself; and she also knew that her cousin, Matthew Eaglestone, had also found an attraction at the deanery; but, shaking her wise little head, she was 'not quite sure whether Isabel cared for him.'

It was well that the child was of a happy sort, and of an independent turn of mind—very well for her own heart, certainly, that she did not want a father's love. Mr. Eaglestone took no notice of this child beyond gazing at her through his spectacles and asking out loud, 'She's a remarkably odd child, isn't she, Mary?' This, of course, when my lady was not in the room. Mary's answer, 'She's a darling,' was enough for Marietta, who had no objection to being odd if it gave her dignity: and so, to the world outside, it seemed that the two old brothers and Mary were one family and Lady Mary and Marietta another.

There was some injustice in this; for not only was the parsonage household a model of harmony, but Lady Mary did her duty well and assiduously. She had made up

her mind as to what her life was to be when she had also made up her resolution to marry Tom Eaglestone. She had marked him down as her prey the first time she saw him, namely, when she had been spending a few days with the bishop at the palace at Redchester, and the good parson had dined there, just two years after the death of his wife.

Lady Mary was at that time hopelessly beyond thirty, and so plain as to be called ugly by the unfeeling. Her parents were both dead. Her father's title, and the lands belonging to it, had drifted aside to her uncle, who had a family of sons. She and a sister had been left, as the world said, penniless, but, according to their trustees' account, with two hundred a year each. In despair the elder had married an aged, gouty, good-tempered old peer, to nurse him in his age and be pensioned after his death. It was a very right-minded bargain, in spite of all romancers. The younger, Lady Mary, preferred Mr. Eaglestone, and made herself agreeable accordingly. She was a clever and an educated woman. She went as near to proposing to him as she dared; and when the proposal was made and accepted, she married him as quickly as she could. So far, certainly, Lady Mary was the designing woman that the squire always felt her to be. But the state of affairs had changed after a time. An old uncle of her mother's died. He had never given them help when they wanted it; but, approving highly of the ways in which they had helped themselves, he left to each fifteen thousand pounds, and Lady Mary was very glad. She was very glad for her husband's sake. He had had four hundred a year from his living, and two hundred a year from his own patrimony, which was settled safely on Mary. His wife's two hundred a year she had from the first divided with him, but now, as each dividend-day occurred, she paid all that came to her into her husband's hands, and made no boast of it, only thanking him for his kind care and protecting love, for he did love her in a way sufficiently satis-

factory, though not with the old love that he thought of sometimes.

Altogether, Lady Mary is not disliked by us, I hope, kind readers. She took great pains about Mary Eaglestone, and had her extremely well taught. No doubt she liked her all the better for her beauty; but she brought her up well and attended to her diligently. When the girl visited her dress was always perfect: no mother could have more critically examined the general effect, or taken more care to place the flowers with her own hand among the luxuriant curls. 'She wants to marry the girl off her hands,' said the dear old unforgiving squire. So she did; but she was bent on marrying her well, and Mary Eaglestone had the abiding sense of being taken care of and made the best of. It was not in human nature not to love so consistent a friend, and she did love her, but not with the devotion she gave to her father, who was not of the smallest apparent use to her, nor with the cheerful delight that Marietta inspired. Mary loved her stepmother as you would love a good, clear-judging, far-seeing strong-headed, and consistently kind protectress. Out of this sort of love there did not come much happiness to Mary; but there grew from it daily increasing power to 'my lady,' and perhaps a sense of safety to Mary, which might have been happiness in its own way.

If this stepmother so considered the girls as invariably to show her to the best advantage; if her quiet comments—they were always quiet—were undeniably correct, how could Mary Eaglestone help trusting her? The government was firm, but always for the good of the governed. 'Let me see you when you are ready,' would be said if she was only going to walk to Eaglestone with her father, if friends were there. Then a few words of criticism, a direction given in the gentlest way, would produce some change, little in itself and great in its results—visibly great to Mary herself, as she looked in the tall glass in Lady Mary's dressing-room—and, 'How good mamma's judgment is, how

well she knows,' was a commentary that strengthened her stepmother's power as often as it was made.

Lady Mary never vexed or irritated her stepdaughter; she never prevented her going into the right company; she took pains that her beauty should suffer no damage from bad dressing; she would pack up the pretty things with her own hand, select things from her own jewellery for her to wear; she would match, compare, combine, till the dress and its ornaments were in perfect taste, and Mary could not help being grateful. She told the girl what songs to sing, and what pieces to play; she practised with her, taught her, perfected her, with an untiring gentle perseverance that would have commanded success with one far less talented than Mary. And all this was done without one word of fussy discussion or vulgar anxiety. Lady Mary's decisions were positive and perfect; they took in everything and extended into all possibilities. The consequences were delightful. Mary Eaglestone was the most beautiful, the best dressed, the best-mannered, the most accomplished girl in that part of the county. Heaven had made her light-hearted. The dreamy brown eyes would look too full of happiness for words written or spoken. Her beauty was not of the flashing kind, but of the sort that intensifies itself with a wonderful power when thoroughly known. The young loved her, they did not know why, only they liked looking at her. Older ones admired her. Everything Mary said or did had a grace with it which was all her own; and all the little world round Redchester, when wondering over her future, generally fixed their thoughts on Harvey Falkland and wished him 'good luck.'

Lady Mary never appeared to dislike her stepdaughter's frequent visits to the deanery. It was the best joy in the girl's life to visit there. She and Isabel were dear friends; it was very improving to talk German with that clever Sarah, and Fraulein Klossack; and Mrs. Mordaunt's kiss was the most truly motherly thing that Mary ever

knew. The dear old dean dreamed blissfully while Mary sang of an evening. And Harvey felt, when he was at home during her visits, that she was his fate.

What Harvey felt all the little world about them knew. Certainly Mary knew it. She knew that Harvey Falkland was her property, but she had not gone that last step in knowledge which would have made her confess that she was his. Lady Mary, who knew and saw everything in her own passionless manner, said to herself that Harvey Falkland was a very charming youth, but not a good match. She knew the dean's means as well as if she had kept his banker's book. He would leave all his children alike five thousand a-piece, perhaps. Harvey was very clever, luckily; he would work himself on. He would pass his examination in the spring—a good one, no doubt—but he was not a good match. This was always the lady's quiet verdict. She never betrayed herself. She was silent and passive. She never refused the dean's invitations to Mary; never deviated from that just line of hers which was to make her stepdaughter, in every way, faultless. She had measured Harvey's strength of character; she knew he was living the most dangerous life; but moths had always flown into fire, and burnt their wings time immemorial—he was a bad match!

Whether Lady Mary Eaglestone had any heart or not, I do not know. She had what people call a great deal of character. I cannot dislike her. I never did. She had never learnt, poor woman, that there was any worse woe than want of money. That woe she had suffered, silently, as those suffer who are ashamed of their grief. That woe she intended to keep from her stepdaughter and from Marietta. Surely there was something good in such a resolution? And she, poor woman—in her ignorance doubly poor—had never learnt that for some men there are greater riches than a good patrimony; that such men as Harvey Falkland had in themselves wealth and true greatness; and that there are worse investments for a woman's

love than the sound head, the true heart, and the ready hands of a man who can labour and win—who can toil and triumph.

Lady Mary had never known the best parts of life, and we need not judge her hardly because of her misfortune. I have said that I do not know whether she had a heart or not. If she had she had never made any acquaintance with it. In this matter of Harvey Falkland and Mary, she never thought of Mary's heart. Such a thought would have been unseemly to her. She never thought of trouble, or feared about disappointment. As she had decided the colour of a ribbon, or pronounced for a wreath, or a single rose, so she should give judgment in this case, if judgment had to be given. The whole experience of Mary's life was that her stepmother knew best. Lady Mary never doubted her own power. 'She must marry well for her own sake and for Marietta's—he is a bad match!'

CHAPTER III.

IF YOU WILL NOT WHEN YOU MAY—

Very early in July, very soon after that ride up to the Charlbury gates which we have already recorded, Matthew Eaglestone and Harvey Falkland were safe in their respective homes. Harvey would be twenty-one the first week in December, and he was going up for his examination in his fourteenth term in the spring. He was reading hard. Matthew, too, was reading; and as he said he was reading with Falkland he used to be often at the deanery in a room called Harvey's study; but he was not going up for his examination for a year—that is, at the Michaelmas examination in the year following.

This long vacation made an important part in these men's lives.

'Harvey Falkland likes being here,' said the old squire, in a suspicion-toned voice to his son, one morning at the breakfast-table, when a note proposing a visit from Falkland lay open.

'Yes. We'll ask Lady Mary, and the others.'

'The others!' growled the squire.

'Yes, all of them.'

'It's lucky you never fall in love with your cousin,' said the old man, his face relaxing into a smile.

Matthew looked up in very honest astonishment.

'She's a cousin twice over; and you would say "No." I think I shall have better luck as far as you are concerned, father, if I fixed on Isabel Falkland.'

'God bless thee, my boy!'

The old man's eyes filled with tears. Matthew had made a bold stroke, all on a sudden, without any preparation.

'The world goes fast; you are not of age till January, and I never thought of it till I was fifty.'

'The only instance of a bad example I can reckon against you,' said Matthew, merrily. 'You have guessed Harvey's secret. For fear of your guessing mine I have told you. It is a secret, and I shall like it all the better for your sharing it. All I mean to say is that when I make my start in life I shall hope for a wife in Isabel.'

Then the two, having finished their breakfast, got up, and shook hands and 'Thank you, father,' closed the subject. But in a moment more Mr. Eaglestone said—

'I think fortune will favour Falkland. He has rare talents. But Lady Mary will marry my niece as she likes.'

'I am sure Mary loves Harvey.'

Matthew spoke hotly. The reply came coldly enough—'That will have nothing to do with it.' Then they parted, and Matthew strolled out to the gravel walk, and felt just a little vexed at his old father's hard judgment; for he valued Mary Eaglestone's lover very much.

Time flowed on merrily. The old Mower's inexorable scythe was wreathed with flowers, surely, Bald-headed Time! How they laughed as he worked, silently, bringing down hours and days—how they laughed, and bade him work harder, for they wanted the months to pass, and felt impatient, calling on the future, that was to bring them the gifts they longed for, to come quickly. Mary, at the deanery—the one privileged

guest who was allowed to share with Sarah Falkland the work that the dean wanted done in the library, where it was his habit to remain in the mornings—Mary at Eaglestone, with the friends she had chosen—in which list Harvey figured always—Mary at the parsonage, where her stepmother welcomed every one with her well-bred, gracious manner—Mary was the heroine of the day, and the position agreed with her perfectly. She looked the perfection of happiness and beauty. People, everywhere, had settled that Harvey was the accepted lover. Lady Mary heard the report, and said ‘Oh no!’ with smiling surprise. And except by that little, ‘Oh no!’ she never spoke of it. And, indeed, Harvey had not spoken to Mary. He only claimed her everywhere openly, and she everywhere yielded to his claim; somehow she knew that after his examination he would speak. And so the winter wore away, and the young man at length returned to St. Isidore’s. Then, the examination time had come, and Harvey was going in for honours.

Soon he was standing with his father again in the library at the deanery. He had taken a Double First. ‘The mother’s own child!’ said the dean; and the good man blessed his boy, and thanked God.

The next thing was that he went to the parsonage and saw Mary Eaglestone. He told her all in good plain manly words; but she looked up in his face, scared, at first, and then dropped her head upon his shoulder, weeping,—‘Oh! Harvey, dream-land was so sweet! Why should we ever awake?’

He did not understand her. And was he not a conqueror, fresh from victories? Did he not know that he had her heart? How could he understand her? So he told her they were each other’s now, and that he would speak to her father when he came home—he was, unluckily, gone away for the day—and she could tell Lady Mary if she pleased. He did not stay long. He had to go to Eaglestone to talk to the squire, and see Matthew; but he promised to come the next day, and so was gone.

Mary had sunk down on a low stool by the window-seat at the foot of a high stand of roses and azaleas, forced into early flower. Lady Mary came in, and sat down at her own little work-table opposite to her.

‘So Harvey Falkland has been here. I have just heard of his success.’ Then she looked steadily at Mary, yet scarcely raising her head from her work, and said, ‘Has he spoken to you?’

The girl looked at the immovable face and said something which meant the truth; and Lady Mary raised her eyebrows once, and gave the slightest of little shrugs.

‘These things will happen,’ she said. ‘I have seen it all along. It is well to have got it over.’

‘But, mamma!’ And Mary turned a piteous face on the serene lady.

‘Yes—I know. He is very clever, and very good-looking. And when he has ceased to be a boy, he will probably be a thoroughly agreeable man of the world. I expect great things of Harvey Falkland. He will succeed in life—achieve some great success. It will take twenty years. And then he will marry—marry well. I am sure he will make a figure at the Bar. He is well born, and that is an advantage to any man who really can and will work. Yes, he will make his fortune, and marry. I give him twenty years.’

Lady Mary spoke with a quiet tone of calculation which carried conviction into Mary’s heart. The girl sat looking up through her tears into Lady Mary’s face, and feeling every icy word drop like a pellet of hard hail into her heart and wound and freeze, and freeze again, till she grew numb and almost senseless under the operation. Lady Mary once more gave a strange look at Mary.

‘You must not feel vexed,’ she said. ‘I have told you the truth. I know, though Harvey does not: but then twenty-one knows so little! It was true enough to drive her mad, and Mary felt it to be so. ‘In twenty years’ time, when he has almost lived the term of his present life over again, we shall go to his wedding—no, I shall not! But you will think of this day, Mary, and do

justice to my prophetic powers. I expect great things from Harvey Falkland.

Then Lady Mary said, 'I must put on my bonnet, and go and see Jane Terry's child'—she was a good woman to the poor always. But really she went to find her husband, and they went to the woman's cottage together.

Now, of all evil things, Lady Mary held 'a scene' in most abhorrence; so she got her husband to write to Harvey Falkland, 'and make it all impossible.' So a note was written—indeed, Lady Mary wrote it herself, and marked it 'Copy,' but in fact it was Mr. Eaglestone's copy that went to Harvey. It was the best, kindest, and most sensible note that ever was written. It told him, too, to write to Mary; and it informed him also that Mary was behaving very well, and was in very sensible dispositions; further, the note said that Lady Mary was going to London, and that this little event had determined her to go immediately. Mary's education was scarcely finished, and this would be a good time for her to have some more singing lessons from *Mdlle. Clara*.

This note made Harvey feel so very young. Had he in the first flush of his first victory made a fool of himself? And was Mary really a young girl not out of the school-room? At first Harvey Falkland actually felt his face burn with shame. Then his courage came back, and with it the inflexible intention of the strong man that he was. He wrote a short note to Mr. Eaglestone, thanking him, and not adding one word to his thanks; and he enclosed a note to Mary, saying he was set aside by her father, but only for the present—he should try again. He should watch, work, and wait. Then he walked into his father's room, called in his sisters, and simply told all that had passed. In that house it gave pleasure rather than pain. No one ever thought of Harvey losing Mary. They were free; but their love was known. Only Matthew Eaglestone, who was actually engaged to Isabel, thought the whole

proceeding an over-cautious one. 'As if Harvey was like other men,' he said; 'it would serve Lady Mary right if she lost him!'

The visit to London took place, and Mary had many masters, and improved vastly. She worked for Harvey's sake, secretly. She would be great in her way, and match him bravely.

At Michaelmas Matthew Eaglestone passed his examination. And then Mrs. Mordaunt, and Isabel, and Matthew joined Lady Mary and her party in a six-weeks' tour on the Continent.

In another year, a little after his twenty-third birthday, Harvey was called to the Bar. He was soon a marked man. Very soon indeed Lady Mary's prophetic words seemed to be finding their accomplishment.

There had been no change in the old relations between the deanery and the parsonage. Harvey was very seldom at home, but when he was he visited the Eaglestones, and Mary knew, in the old way, that he was her property.

Four years had passed: Mary was just twenty-two, and Harvey was nearly twenty-five. He was at the deanery, to be present at Isabel's marriage, and he asked Mary once more. But when he went to her father he was still refused. He had not income enough to marry upon. He was very young still. He had little, if any, inheritance. The dean made him a good allowance, but the dean might die.

Sitting with Lady Mary, whom he knew to be all-powerful, he argued, begged, prayed. 'Might it not be an engagement to be fulfilled when he was rich? Only let him hope.'

Kind, cold, sensible Lady Mary only answered, 'No, no; for both their sakes, no.'

There was a little anger at the deanery. Some not unjust resentments burnt in the dean's warm heart. It was cruel to the young people. Mary was old enough to judge for herself. If Mary chose to engage herself to Harvey, then Harvey's father would not think her in the wrong. He was convinced that his son would be a great man.

And so it happened, that after a time Harvey wrote from London to Mary, and asked her to assert her woman's rights, and engage herself to him. And he did this at a quiet moment in their history. The dear old squire at Eaglestone Manor was dead, and Matthew had got a government appointment in Canada. It was an honourable and an important post; and before he and Isabel left England they wished to see Mary Eaglestone's future arranged happily. The manor-house was to be let: this would change their position at the parsonage a good deal; and as Harvey's talents had attracted considerable attention, it was no longer imprudent for the engagement to be allowed: if not allowed, she would still have the right to pledge herself to wait until sufficient success to satisfy her father was achieved.

This Harvey urged in a letter. And in this letter he said that his father was coming to London to have a last sight of Isabel, and he would bring either message or note from her. 'But,' he said, 'if you have not courage enough to stand by me now, don't tell me so. I could not bear it. I have before now pleaded for you as few men would have pleaded—as I could not have done had not my love been stronger than my pride. No new arguments can be brought forward. I will not bear the repetition of the old ones. Of course you will show this letter to your father. I now very humbly entreat him to sanction our engagement. If he still fears, I ask you so far to assert your rights as to promise to wait for me.'

Mary showed her letter, and very proud she was of it. Her father was very kind, and said he loved Harvey, but he must insist that Lady Mary's judgment should be taken. 'She always knows best. She has made you what you are. She has the best judgment in the world. I will have no departure in this case from her will.'

He had never in his life spoken so positively to his daughter. And Lady Mary was more frigid, more wise, more impassible than ever.

'Child's-play! He knows nothing

of life. The ruin of both. The dean is quite right; he is sure to be a great man, if they will only let him. It is madness to hamper a youth with a young wife; and as to an engagement, fancy all the London girls he will be deceiving if he succeeds, as we all expect, in the next few years. Why, Sir Henry Easthead, who was born much lower down than Harvey, married Lord Grimstone's daughter when he was only forty-three, and founded a family, and left a splendid fortune behind him. Really this scheme to ruin Harvey, and make Mary a drudge for life is the most ignorant thing I ever heard of, and very unkind to both of them.' Then, after a pause, 'I had better write to Harvey myself.'

So, when the day for the dean's departure came, Lady Mary was with him in his library. She was the embodiment of all worldly wisdom. He knew that she was right in a sense. But then he felt that he was right in a better sense, and a higher. But he had no right to contradict her.

'I have written to Harvey. Where do you put the things you are to take to him?'

'In that open, deep drawer in my table.'

She put her little packet into the drawer, and stood a moment before it.

'Thank you,' said the dean; and Lady Mary moved away. But in that moment she had seen a small parcel directed to Harvey in Mary's writing. For one moment she was tempted to take it away; but she thrust the thought from her, and left it where it was.

By this you will see that Mary had visited the good old man; she, too, had asked where to place her note to Harvey; she, too, had been directed to the open drawer, and there she had deposited her written promise to wait for him all her life if he so willed. The shy little soul had not told the dean. And now he gathered up notes and parcels, and a few letters he wished Harvey to read, and by the afternoon was off for town. His mind was full of Lady Mary's truisms. If Mary had

talked to him he would never have listened to them.

Mary Eaglestone had gone back very happy in the strength of her secret. She had a right to wait: she had a right never to marry. If she chose to wait on till death freed her from her promise, she could do it in the exercise of her just rights, in virtue of her individuality. She went back a girl no longer—a woman, once for all. But she did not guess that the woman's lot may be harder than the girl's.

The dean travelled to London, and thought Lady Mary a very sensible woman, who knew the world very well. You see, she had flattered the old man, and prophesied unmeasured greatness for Harvey. Not that she was deceitful. She stuck to her verdict that he was a very bad match, and pronounced the same distinctly; but the dean was flattered, nevertheless.

The dean stayed three weeks in London, and during this time Harvey never wrote to Mary. The Dean came back and brought no letter. Mary went to the deanery, but there was no sign. She thought Mrs. Mordaunt's kiss lingered on her cheek a little. She fancied that Sarah avoided being alone with her. She knew that the dean made a greater show of kindness than usual.

Things had been different since Isabel's marriage, perhaps; the loss of the great friends in a family is a loss that includes a change. No one said a word of Harvey; and Mary could not ask about him. But when weeks had grown into months; when her memory kept on producing the words in which she had promised herself to him, till they came back to her in the night, trumpet-tongued, and woke her out of sleep; then she determined to speak to Lady Mary.

'Mamma, that time—some time since, when the dean went to London to see—to see Isabel and Matthew before they went—did you write to Harvey Falkland?'

'Yes, my love.'

'Did he answer you?'

'Yes, he answered me: you can see his letter, and the copy of mine, if you like.'

'I should like to see them, mamma.'

Lady Mary did not keep her waiting. She went into Mr. Eaglestone's study, and found the letters, and brought them immediately. Lady Mary's letter was only a repetition of the old argument—that Harvey would be great one day, but that he was a bad match before that end was gained; and Harvey's answer was short, manly, and hearty—he had no longer any doubt that Lady Mary was right, and her step-daughter safest under her protection.

It was all plain. He had listened to those who called themselves wise. He had cast aside her poor little promises of faithfulness. She had offered her life to him, because he had told her to do so; and then he would not have it.

The girl sat still with the open letters in her lap. She could with difficulty believe her eyesight. But she did believe at last, and then she gave the letters back. Lady Mary replaced them; then she returned to the room and to her occupation. The subjects just considered did not admit of conversation.

'People say the Tufston Smiths want to be Matthews' tenants at the manor-house,' she said, after a pause. And then Mary knew that they were never again to speak of Harvey Falkland.

(To be continued.)



SUMMER ON THE SPANISH FRONTIER.

WHAT has become of the English mineral springs? Are the chalybeate waters of our island less efficacious than of yore? Can we no longer hope to simmer away maladies in the hot, or poison diseases with the cold water, as our grandparents did? The glory of the 'Wells' has departed, and though Bath, Harrogate, Cheltenham, and Tunbridge are frequented still, it is mostly curiosity that takes the visitors of the present day to see the places where their ancestors strolled, flirted, and sipped the nauseous water, in bag-wigs and ruffles, hoops and powder. The once famous pump-rooms are given over to dust and the ghosts of the past, and little else but memory remains of the glorious times when beauty, rank, and fashion flocked to bathe, drink, dance, and gamble their days and nights, at one or other of the towns which had risen round the mineral springs of England. With us the chalybeates have certainly gone out of fashion, but with our neighbours across the Channel it is quite the contrary, for year after year an increasing number visit the watering-places in the Pyrenees, where the springs are the hottest, the strongest, and the nastiest in Europe. According to medical testimony undoubted benefit is to be derived from undergoing a course of the waters, and many of the villages in the beautiful mountain district of southern France become transformed, during certain months in the year, into complete hospitals. Of such, Baréges (a town which gives its name to a stuff which is *not* made there) is probably the chief. No one in sound mind and health would dream of staying there—so desolate are its surroundings, so depressing the sight of sickness and infirmity encountered at every step. Disease, in every form that can hop upon crutches or crawl with the help of sticks, is ever before the visitor's eyes; and not the most cheery spectacle is a huge, ugly, substantial military hospital

(for the waters are said to be very efficacious in curing gun-shot wounds), whence peer and crawl hundreds of disabled soldiers, sent thither by the French government to bathe in the healing springs. The natural situation of Baréges is nearly as dismal and depressing as its hospitals. It is hemmed in on either side by bare mountains—bare not in the grandeur of massive granite peaks but swept desolate by the avalanches which scour down their sides in early spring, making oft-times clear breaches through the one long line of houses which constitutes the town. The inhabitants, from economical motives, decline to repair the breaches thus made, dreading to sink capital in the erection of buildings which the next winter's snow may sweep away; but the unsightly gaps are blocked up by rudely-constructed wooden sheds which serve as shops during the summer, and as firewood during the winter, for the half-dozen wretched creatures who, in spite of cold, bears, and snow remain throughout the winter months in charge of the town of Baréges, driven not unfrequently to huddle together round the hot springs for warmth.

It is purely for the healing properties of its mineral waters that Baréges is visited, save occasionally by a curious and enterprising tourist; but with the majority of the Pyrenean towns this is not the case; for as many pleasure-seekers pass their holidays in them, as invalids, attracted not by the mineral springs but by the marvellous beauty of the lovely valleys and richly-wooded mountains in and about which they are situated. The most charming of these and yet, strange to say, the one least visited by English, is Bagnères de Luchon, a town nestling in a basin formed by the verdant spurs of the great boundary ridge of France and Spain, and rich in nature's magnificence and beauty.

The Alps are grander and more imposing than the Pyrenees, while

they are bleaker and barer, for it is upon its foliage as much as upon the majesty of its mountain forms, that the beauty of the district depends; and for those who prefer a gay sparkling smiling landscape to a gloomy frowning one, the Pyrenees possess superior charms to the Alps. The brilliant hues of nature clothing the mountain sides with every shade, from the lightest yellow to the blackest green, innumerable species of trees uniting to form the marvellous forests which cover the precipitous slopes, differing much from Switzerland, where the sombre pine forests, extending for miles in uninterrupted blackness, sadden and depress the traveller with their gloomy grandeur. In one of the loveliest of the lovely Pyrenean valleys Bagnères de Luchon is situated, the last town on one of the most frequented mule passes into Spain—that of the Porte de Venasque; and thither from all parts of France throng, between the months of May and October, invalids, pleasure-seekers, and tourists, who crowd the hotels, bathe, promenade, and excursionize, surrounded by the most beautiful and romantic scenery artist could desire. The old part of the town is but rarely visited by the tourists, nor need it be, for it possesses no feature of attraction, and for the benefit of summer residents there is a new town extending from the ancient portion to the battery or thermal establishment, in one long broad street planted with a double row of trees, and called the Allée d'Etigny. This allée is the fashionable promenade of Bagnères de Luchon, and is sufficiently gay to afford an amusing spectacle at all hours of the day. Fashionably-dressed ladies stroll up and down, or sit beneath the trees, attended by fancifully-attired gentlemen (for when a Frenchman leaves cities he is given to launch into the wildest extravagance in hats, coats, and neck-ties), who smoke cigarettes and in their volubility exhaust the superlatives of their language in admiration of the scenery. As the table d'hôte hour approaches the loungers reënter their hotels to make their dinner toilet, and the various excursionists stream back from the mountains to the town, a few limping jaded pedestrians hurry along beneath the shelter of the trees, and parties of noisy Frenchmen gallop furiously up to the hotel doors shouting, cracking long-tongued whips, and turning out their heels to display the enormous spurs which, as cavaliers, they fancy themselves bound to assume. From a quarter before six till a few minutes after, Luchon echoes with the clang of bells. Each hotel—and every second house in the Allée d'Etigny is one—sends forth its most muscular waiter, loaded with the heaviest bell under which he can stagger, and for a space of twenty minutes the poor unfortunate is compelled to sway his burden to and fro to announce that dinner is about to be served. From six o'clock till seven the Allée d'Etigny reposes. A few guides only saunter beneath the trees; Punchinello rests in his box whilst his proprietor refreshes himself in a neighbouring café; the contrabandists disappear; the cigarette sellers doze on the benches, and quiet reigns until the dinners are concluded, when a rush is made for hats and bonnets, and the avenue is again thronged with a gay pleasure-seeking crowd. In a few minutes every seat round the marble-topped tables of the chief café is appropriated. Coffee, liqueurs, and lemonade are in great demand, and clouds of fragrant tobacco-smoke rise in the still, soft, warm evening air, until a faint sound of music in the distance draws all the idlers in the same direction, and the Allée d'Etigny is deserted for the thermal establishment, in a large open space facing which an orchestra is erected, whence a creditable band nightly charms the visitors to Bagnères de Luchon with dance music and operatic selections. Such is fashionable Luchon, a cheerful, idle place, where the summer days may be idled and frittered away pleasantly enough, independently of the marvellously beautiful excursions to be made about the mountains which enclose it. Early every morning parties start from the different hotels to explore the valleys, though it is

very rarely that pedestrians are to be met with in the Pyrenees, the tourists, and in many instances the guides, declining to undertake excursions on foot. Horses are brought to the doors, the ladies and gentlemen mount, and then, preceded by a guide generally picturesquely costumed, the party canters down the avenue, bound for the lovely Val de Lys, the rugged Porte de Venasque, the charming Lac d'Oo, or some other of the many pleasant excursions to be made from the town. The shops, bearing the rather startling inscription '*Amazones à louer*,' furnish the ladies with the exquisite riding-dresses, while the gentlemen equip themselves in white trousers bound round the waist with a broad scarlet sash, Spanish fashion, spurs, and a whip. This crimson sash is the first purchase of every French tourist, the second is the whip of the country. This whip has a short handle and a long lash; it is as gay as paint and ribbons can make it; and after a long and tiresome apprenticeship the owner is sometimes able to produce by its aid a succession of sharp, pistol-like cracks, which may by an expert be made to mark the time of a tune with accuracy, the while the long lash whirls round his head like a huge catherine-wheel. There is considerable excitement attending the learning of this noble art, the novice being startled not unfrequently by the lash twining fondly round his neck or affectionately saluting his face; but the difficulties once overcome and the art mastered, nothing so well pleases the proficient as to make a constant display of his skill; and it is no unusual thing to meet on a mountain road a party of French tourists urging their horses to the wildest trots by the incessant cracking of these whips, whooping the while as if possessed by demons.

For the old town of Luchon but little need be said. It is as narrow and dirty as the majority of old French towns, and has the same population of women in caps, men in blouses, and children in jackets. It has its cabarets and estaminets, and it has a little dusty patch of ground a few

yards off the high road, where the inhabitants assemble on fête days, to dance, drink, smoke, laugh, and sing in memory of their saints. At some of the fashionable Pyrenean watering-places the tourist is pestered with fêtes got up by the hotel proprietors to attract custom, fêtes consisting of foot and donkey races interspersed with national dances in national dresses, which are chiefly characterised by a dulness and insipidity totally foreign to the French nation when enjoying itself. The youths who, gaily decked in ribbons, endeavour to infuse life and energy into their actions, evidently cannot be convinced that they are enjoying themselves, for in their attempted mirth and merriment there is the consciousness that they are brought together and dressed in strange costume, not for their own gratification but for the amusement of the fashionable visitors, who, from roughly-erected stands, scan them through opera-glasses, as if it were a ballet at a Paris theatre they were witnessing. Far different is such a scene to a genuine people's fête, where the villagers gather together, bent on extracting as much enjoyment as possible from sour wine and vigorous saltatory exercise. A merry gleeful party of country folks assemble towards the close of day, in any available open space in or near the town. As it grows dark a few coloured paper lamps are swung across the street, and the orchestra takes up its position on two planks elevated on a couple of casks. From this elevation a boy with a fiddle, a man with a double-bass, and an idiot with a drum, discourse sweet music with an appalling recklessness to concord, and to these strains dance some twenty or thirty couples of merry-hearted, light-footed girls and youths, who in the pauses refresh themselves with copious draughts of wine cheap to the purse and vinegary to the palate. Gay and happy are the dancers, as if their floor was of the choicest marqueterie, their lamps the most gorgeous chandeliers, their orchestra Coote and Tinney's, and their wine Moët's or Clicquot's finest brand; while round about them stretches

an elderly and faded fringe of the grandfathers and grandmothers of the town, looking on admiringly at the younger generation enjoying itself. All is conducted with the greatest propriety, though the amount of muscular exercise introduced into a quadrille might astonish those gentlemen who are accustomed to lounge through the figures so listlessly in an English ball-room; and if when about midnight the merry-makers disperse one or two of the men walk somewhat unsteadily, it is most charitable to suppose that so much waltzing has made them giddy.

Of these people's fêtes the most notable is that held yearly on the 15th of August at the little village of Laruna, situated two or three miles from Eaux Bonnes, another of the Pyrenean watering-places, where a strong mineral spring and exquisite scenery have caused the erection of a cluster of hotels, a casino, and a thermal establishment.

In a quaint old market-place, surrounded by picturesque buildings, and with a queerly-carved fountain for a centre, the fête is held. Two or three hundred men and women, attired in the full dress picturesque costume of the country, meet there to dance the national dances to the music of the pipe and tabor; but it is neither the music nor the dancing that attracts tourists every 15th of August to the little town, but the strange faces and the marvellous dresses in the midst of a landscape so very beautiful that it is difficult to realise that it is not a stage effect, that Mr. Grieve has not painted the scenery, and that Mr. Harris has not arranged the groups and dances. There are women with scarlet capulets or hoods and delicately-embroidered scarves; there are men in elaborately-worked shirts and knee-breeches, supported by the never-fading crimson sash of Southern France; there are old Spaniards in long sheepskin cloaks reaching to their heels; there are young Spaniards in handsome dresses, in which all the brightest colours are so artistically mingled as to show none predominant;

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there are guides in their bright gay holiday attire, old women somewhat more sombrely dressed, but still with the crimson capulet, and oftentimes showing in their ornaments rich jewellery and rough but elaborate gold filigree work; and last, but not least, numerous Spanish priests, shovel-hatted and black-gowned, who do not scruple to mix with the people, and relax their grim countenances as the crowd moves hither and thither about them, full of life, happiness, and animation, while the monotonous thumping of the tabor and the dismal bleating of the pipe rise above the laughter and shouting of the merry-makers.

The windows of the houses round the market-place are mostly let to tourists, who come from all parts to be present at this singular fête; and the elaborate Parisian toilets of the ladies contrast strangely with the charming picturesqueness and quaint originality of a scene, to which neither pen nor pencil can do justice. The young actors in the *revel* are mostly good-looking, partaking, as is natural, more of the Spanish, than the French in their style of face. Many, indeed, of both men and women are remarkably handsome, with glossy black hair and large and lustrous dark eyes; but early old age, particularly with the women, detracts much from their good looks, some of apparently not more than thirty or thirty-five being wrinkled, haggard, and elderly looking.

To watch the dancers, to stroll from group to group, to gaze on the handsome animated faces, the strange costumes, and the picturesque surroundings, is alone worth the journey to Laruna. To miss the fête of the 15th of August is to lose one of the prettiest, gayest, and liveliest scenes that the most fertile brain can imagine; and though guides and hotel-keepers at other Pyrenean towns pooh-pooh the affair, and endeavour to dissuade tourists from travelling to see it, it will be well for them to pay no heed to such interested advice, but, despite the inconveniences of crowded conveyances and hotels,

to journey to Larans and judge for themselves.

To return to the pleasant town of Bagnères de Luchon, from which the fêtes have led us far astray. Amongst its numberless attractions and advantages one must not remain unnoticed, which might influence many a muscular pedestrian and hardy mountaineer in making it his head-quarters, and that is its proximity to many of the high peaks and lofty passes of the Pyrenean range, though when compared with the Swiss mountains they are but very, very few who attempt to scale the giants which tower above the little town, and consequently good and experienced guides are not always to be met with. An English gentleman, Mr. Charles Packe, who has resided for some years in the district, has played the part of explorer, and has published a small guide-book to the mountains, which is the only reliable source of information in the English language. From Luchon is made the ascent of the monarch of the Pyrenees, the Maladetta, which, though insignificant in point of height when compared to Mont Blanc, being little over eleven thousand feet, offers sufficient dangers and hardships to tempt the ambitious climber to reach its highest point, the Pic Nethou. Two days are required for the expedition, and those two days of severe exertion for the pedestrian. Starting early in the morning, the boundary ridge of France and Spain is crossed by the Porte de Venasque (for the monarch is situated in the latter country), and about one-third of the ascent made to where a few overhanging rocks, just below the line of perpetual snow, afford shelter for the night. On a bed of pine-leaves and stones the tourists and guides sleep, if possible, a roaring fire being kept up throughout the night, and before daybreak the party starts from this resting-place, known as the cave of the Rencluse, and after some hours over steeply sloping snow and glacier, and a perilous passage across a terribly narrow isthmus of rock, called the Pont de Mahomet, reach the summit, and have the satisfaction of being above

everything, and of enjoying a marvellously beautiful panorama, extending, especially on the Spanish side, an almost fabulous number of miles. The descent and return to Luchon can be accomplished in the same day, though only by the hardy pedestrian, involving, as it does, at least fifteen hours on foot, exclusive of rests.

For the less daring tourist there are many excursions to be made from Luchon with far smaller amount of hazard and fatigue. The hill known as Superbagnères, rising immediately behind the town, is comparatively easy of ascent, and affords a charming prospect; but the one trip every visitor is called upon to make, is to the exquisite little Lac d'Oo.

The great want in the Pyrenees is water, none of the lakes even approaching in size those of our own country, consequently every roadside pool and mountain tarn is magnified into a lake. The Lac d'Oo is not even the largest of these, but owing to the wonderful beauty of the mountain scenery around, and to the magnitude of a cascade which falls into it from a considerable height, it is looked upon, and rightly, as one of the gems of the Pyrenees, and is the favourite excursion from Bagnères de Luchon. It would be easy to add a catalogue of names of the many excursions to be made from this charmingly situated town, but a visitor need never be at a loss for such information while guides and hotel-keepers flourish, and to a stay-at-home stranger such a catalogue would be names only, for to the majesty and beauty of the scenery no description can do justice. The vivid hues of nature, the variegated foliage, the grand mountain outline, the deep blue sky, and the picturesque costumes, are all equally indescribable.

Unfortunately for tourists the conveyances from one place to another in the Pyrenees are by no means well ordered, and to those accustomed to the rapid, well-appointed Swiss diligences the tedious, dilapidated, lumbering old coaches, which lurch and stagger over the lower passes, will present a sad con-

traet. The traveller who engages a seat in the banquette must be prepared to take his place on a hard board some eight inches wide, with a stiff leathern apron cramping his legs, and with, probably, a tobacco-smoking, garlic-chewing peasant on either side, and a baking sun scorching full upon his face. He must be prepared for snail-like crawling up hill, for screams, shouts, and whip-crackings from the driver, who, with a dingy blouse, a rank cigar, a black sausage, and a long-thonged whip, is seated immediately in front of him, and for joltings, jerkings, and bumpings every ten yards. He must start on his journey with a more than ordinary amount of patience, a tolerably well-filled purse, and, if he proposes to stray far from the beaten track, with not too great a notion of cleanliness in hotel accommodation or niceties in cooking; but still, with all these disadvantages, the tourist will do well to turn his attention to the Pyrenees when next he starts upon his holiday trip; and if he proposes to make a sojourn of any duration, no better head-quarters can possibly be found during the summer months than Bagnères de Luchon. For the winter Bagnères de Bigorre, a town twenty-one miles distant from Luchon, is a very favourite resort, bidding fair in time to rival Pau, that great head-quarters of invalid and warmth-loving English; in the hot months, however, it is comparatively deserted, the greater portion of the inhabitants seeking the cooler climate of the mountain towns. However pleasant Bagnères may be as a winter residence, it is but little calculated for a resting-place for the summer tourist, being away from the higher mountains, overpoweringly hot, and sadly expensive. There are many charming walks in the neighbourhood, and certain small heights, the scalars of which are rewarded by beautiful views; but when the traveller can penetrate into the heart of the mountains he will hardly be satisfied with the views he obtains of them from the hills about Bagères de Bigorre.

In the neighbourhood of the town a curious mode of catching pigeons

is practised, which has, at all events, the merit of novelty to the greater portion of those who see it. To the top of long slender poles small baskets are fixed at a height of forty or fifty feet from the ground. These baskets, containing men and sometimes children, sway backwards and forwards in the wind in a manner which threatens momentarily to precipitate the occupants to the earth, but without fear they maintain their positions, and skilfully throw and fix nets to trap the pigeons, which in the autumn months flock to the neighbourhood by thousands. In this sport (if it may be dignified by the name) they are usually very successful, but as yet no adventurous tourists have volunteered to take a part in it, they preferring to join in the greatest humbug ever practised upon cockney holiday makers—a bear-hunt. In the winter a hardy sportsman stands a chance of meeting Brnin, but during the hot months, when food is plentiful in the woods, it is nearly impossible to track the bears to their haunts in the depths of the all but impenetrable forests. This fact none know better than the guides; nevertheless, to them hunting-parties are sources of revenue, and consequently two or three are usually organised during the tourist season. How the guides and hunters must laugh in their sleeves at the preparations and the big talk preparatory to such an expedition! What a joke it must be to them to see Frenchmen (Englishmen are not often caught) arming themselves with weapons of which they have but the faintest notion of the use, and girding themselves with paraphernalia with which it would be impossible to force a way through the thick forests. They can well afford to laugh, too, can the guides, for they are well paid in consideration of the dangers and difficulties they may have to encounter. The party starts spruce in dress, polished in weapons, and bragging in language; it returns sad and dejected, footsore and weary, ragged and torn in dress, battered and bruised in weapons, and with a doleful account of having reached a

cave where some bears had been the previous day, on the strength of which the noble sportsmen will possibly consider themselves justified in saying, on their return to Paris, that they very nearly shot a bear during their summer tour in the Pyrenees. With the izard (the chamois of the Alps) a good shot is far more likely to have sport than with the bear, but the difficulties, hardships, and dangers of the chase deter the majority of pleasure-seekers, and it is only the best and most experienced guides who are qualified to lead the adventurous sportsman amongst the rocks, precipices, and glaciers of the izard's home, though even in summer one of the timid creatures will occasionally wander down near the dwellings of men. Then there is bustle, confusion, and excitement in the village; old guns are hunted up, formidable knives are sharpened, and the inhabitants turn out to

search for the unfortunate animal who has ventured from his mountain home, and if he be discovered, but little chance has he of escaping the fate of the cooking-pot.

To the sportsman secure of foot, steady of head, and inured to fatigue and hardship, the Pyrenean mountains afford a promising field; to the scaler of break-neck peaks the Franco-Spanish boundary offers nearly as many perils as the Alps; to the invalid the strong mineral springs hold out a prospect of cure; to the delicate the climate promises soft mildness in the depth of winter; to the artist the landscape claims equal admiration with that of Switzerland; and to the tourist the entire district offers majesty of scenery, antiquities, never-ending novelties, and altogether as pleasant a trip as can be made for a sum not much exceeding the cost of a tour through Switzerland.

AT DINNER IN THE CITY.

PEOPLE who only go to the City four times a year, and after transacting some very pleasant business, adjourn to Birch's for a plate of soup and a glass of dry sherry, can have little idea of the vast amount of eating which is transacted every day between the hours of twelve and two o'clock within a radius of say half a mile from the Royal Exchange.

Standing lately at the Mansion House, on a 'Dividend Day,' and watching the great crowd of people hurrying hither and thither in the full tide of a busy noon, we heard a young woman—who was waiting for some favourable opportunity of crossing to the Bank—remark to her companion, 'And all these people must die!'

She was a healthy-looking country lass, by whom so sudden an enunciation of the old Trappist formula, at such a time and place, was not a little startling; and yet with that perverse habit of human nature which renders us prone to put off serious considerations till to-mor-

row, we found ourselves—after the first solemn acknowledgment of its truth—somewhat altering the tendency of this moral consideration by the more temporal reflection that all these people must, or should, *dine*. The force of the suggestion may have been enhanced by the fact that a slender breakfast had made some such proceeding a matter of immediate personal interest.

There was, however, an embarrassment, not of riches, but of opportunities, inasmuch as there were so many 'places of refreshment' to choose from that for a full half-hour after the seriously-minded young woman had been hustled into 'an Angel omnibus,' and carried northwards, we were still idling about the Royal Exchange, counting three-and-sixpence in our right-hand waistcoat-pocket; and with an intimate and peculiar knowledge of the City scarcely inferior to that of Mr. Samuel Weller himself, endeavouring to decide on a mean between appetite and pecuniary resources.

There is, said we, addressing ourselves in a lofty and patronising manner, the 'Ship and Turtle,' in Leadenhall Street, opposite to the spot where the India House once stood, and lying, as it were, in the shadow of a departed glory. What succulent feasts have been served in that dim, quiet, stuffy room, where solemn diners exhaust real turtle, served in private tureens, at a shilling a spoonful, and mitigate the unctuous flavour of green fat with rare old port, 'curious' sherry, or tawny Madeira. There below, in cellars which extend who shall say how far beneath the neighbouring thoroughfare, a score of serious turtles gasp with open-eyed surprise in tanks from which each of them will be taken to make callipash and callipee. About the whole place there is an air of mysterious reserve, as though that still dingy apartment, which few men can afford to enter, were but the vestibule of some symposium of more than Oriental magnificence.

There is a modest tavern in the opposite street, and still nearer to the place where the palace of John Company once stood, where a company of German guests meet daily to consume a dozen dishes, every one of which represents a form of veal; and where schnapps and strange liqueurs alternate with great glasses of Baerisch beer or light, crude Rhenish wine with that bouquet of old cheese which the Germans love.

There are the Sale Rooms in Mincing Lane, where space is so valuable that the skylighted hall devoted to refreshments is crowded with hungry brokers, who despatch hasty luncheons in the intervals of bidding for sugar, spices, myrabolams, dye-stuffs, rags, and galen-gall root, and where the odours of all these seem somehow to mingle in the air with the steams of many meats. There is a companion establishment opposite, where the walls are hung with pictures of greater or less price, and sprawling Venuses, as fresh as last week's paint, will look down upon us as we wait for 'a follower' in the shape of a long-bone chop.

To say nothing of French and

Italian restaurants, where made dishes, outlandish pastry, and savoury messes of strange name and flavour, tempt the curious and the dyspeptic—there are dozens of pastrycooks where the legitimate trade is supplemented, if not supplanted, by the provision of dinners in back rooms devoted to the purpose. To these places scores of City men go at mid-day for a sort of second breakfast, consisting principally of coffee with a light accompaniment of relishes, buns, bread and butter, or pastry, instead of more substantial refectation. It might be worth while to inquire, by the way, whether aggravated forms of dyspepsia are not becoming more common in consequence of this substitute for the old-fashioned midday meal. The foreign flavour of the innovation has no doubt given it a peculiar zest, for the refreshments are served on marble-topped tables, while the velvet cushions, the straw-bottomed chairs, the tiny plates, and the thick, hot porcelain cups are of the Boulevard pattern. The very knives are so blunt that they might be made of French steel, and the male attendants wear jackets and white aprons.

There are other pastrycooks—some of them under the shadow of St. Paul's—where although there are few genuine diners, many ladies, out shopping, stay to take an aerial snack at lunch-time. At one of these it is said that Sabbath wayfarers who became exhausted during service-time could once gain admittance, and obtain sustenance in the shape of a currant bun, for which they had to pay sixpence, a charge the exorbitance of which was mitigated by the present of a glass of foaming ale or stout.

At the oldest-looking of these old-fashioned establishments—the one which has about it a tinge of the dean and chapter, a remedy for whooping-cough is dispensed along with soup, patties, and jellies, and at another the clergy of all sects who visit the metropolis for the May meetings congregate as on a broad and unsectarian platform, under the ministry of a neat, peach-cheeked attendant with a coloured ribbon

and a sedately determined manner, who is alike ready to dispense tea and muffins for the meek curate, or port wine and mulligatawny soup to the High Church dignitary. Here, too, students from dissenting colleges, who have come to London to 'supply' or are on trial before having 'charges' committed to them, dissipate on anatomical dissections of cold fowl, or on blocks of veal pie, with the accompaniment of wine and water, or lemonade and—something to take off the rawness.

There are, in the very heart of the City, thriving chop-houses where most of the cookery is effected by white-capped, white-jacketed men who superintend the gridiron,—where, in fact, you witness the preparation of your dinner through a rapid process not uninteresting to the man with a healthy appetite.

These places lie mostly in odd nooks, away from the bustle of the main streets, but yet only at such a distance as gives them an air of having stepped round the corner to wait for you as you came by. They are mostly known by the abbreviated Christian names of their proprietors, and either Ned, Tom, Sam, Joe, or Ben, may be, and probably is, a well-to-do gentleman who comes daily to the City in his brougham, from some elegant little suburban villa, in order to take the pennies which are included in each customer's account.

Some of the white-jacketed cooks after a certain period during which they have deftly handled the tongs and turned the chops and steaks over the scorching embers, become proprietors in their turn, and having always been known as Will, or Joe, or Sam, will retain that appellation till they are venerable capitalists with a swinging account at their bankers.

One of the earliest of these City chop-houses was not long ago banished by metropolitan improvements. It was one of the good old-fashioned taverns where the merchant, the banker, the millionaire even, would take the outlet which he had previously bought at Mr. Bannister's, and carried in a newspaper in his coat-pocket.

At the Fleece, in Threadneedle

Street, the wealthy merchant and the humble clerk acknowledged a common humanity in the necessity for dining, and each depended equally upon the sagacious Betsy, who distributed, with unfailing integrity and marvellous memory, chops, steaks, and fillets to their proper owners, as they sat hot and happy in those dark, narrow boxes upon which the great fire cast a ruddy glow. Who that has been there will ever forget those juicy steaks, those mealy potatoes just bursting from their russet coats, that seductive Scotch ale, purling in bright bubbles over the rim of the burnished tankard—that mellow and insidious punch for which the place was famous!

Down the channeled bars of that mnemonic gridiron there dripped every year a hundred pounds' worth of kitchen-stuff; and when the Fleece was pulled down and Mr. Bannister removed to King Street, old gentlemen might be seen at about twelve o'clock munching a biscuit as they looked wistfully at the ruins of the old tavern, and then walking dinnerless away.

There are two or three establishments where even the possession of sixpence would insure a meal; notably two well-doing houses at which boiled beef and beef à-la-mode are dispensed in plates large and small. For juvenile clerks with very small salaries, or in the still more anomalous position of giving their services for twelve months 'in order to acquire business habits,' even 'a four-penny smear,' as we remember hearing a plate of à-la-mode irreverently called, must be a great advantage.

There is, moreover, the celebrated Bay Tree close at hand, where you may make one of a great busy crowd all engaged in the hurried despatch of food. Standing hustled together at the counter, or in long rows at the rude tresselled boards which represent a great table reaching from end to end of the immense bar, painfully intent on discovering some gap where they may secure a vacant foot of table room, appropriating a cask accidentally left in transit, and even seeking a temporary accommodation on the stairs; the customers at the

Bay Tree dispose of all kinds of eatables, while the clash of plates, the sharp rapping of the beer-engines, the shrill cries of waitresses, and the buzz and hum of talk from such mouths as are not too full for utterance, make confusion worse confounded. Experience may prove that the food is good and cheap—but oh, Zoological Gardens at feeding time! oh, refreshment table at a scientific *conversazione*! oh, metropolitan soup kitchen! oh, ice-room at a dancing party in Mayfair!—this is not dining.

Nobody expects an Apician feast now-a-days, however, and though the demand for oysters of Britain is greater than in the days when the Roman epicures devoured them as a whet to their pampered appetites, and both Pimm's and Sweeting's are full to overflowing of admirers who pay eighteenpence a dozen for the delicate bivalves, men have no time to spare even for necessary nourishment. So come back from Pompeii to the Poultry, and leave Byzantium for Bucklersbury.

Bucklersbury—Byzantium. Have you (this to ourselves) have you been standing here a full hour and not thought of Izant's? Izant's, which is synonymous with a midday meal in the City; Bucklersbury, which is but another name for Izant's, for which the street, secondarily useful as a thoroughfare from Cheapside to the Mansion House backdoor, was undoubtedly built.

To about two thousand hungry men and youths the name of Izant is a sound to make the mouth water daily; and yet, modest in its sense of popularity, the establishment which bears it is so quiet and unobtrusive that a stranger might almost pass the door. Not if he pondered the path of his feet, however, for there, on the very threshold stone, that name is inscribed like the 'Salve' at the Pompeian porch. The first impression of the stranger who finds himself inside the hospitable door of this great City eating house is its limited size and its orderly quietude. In a place where every square foot of ground represents so much value, space is an object, and Izant's consists, for the most part, only of a row

of boxes (each containing a white-draped table) on either side of a tolerably long room. To get through the enormous business of the day it is therefore necessary to welcome the coming and to speed the parting guest; and both operations are effected with an absence of bustle and confusion which would be in itself sufficient to elevate Izant's to the position it holds in the regard of regular and unostentatious diners.

Not without ornament, but with a sober reticence and an air of comfort well illustrated by the one large corner table lighted at night by a standing lamp, and provided with writing materials, Izant's exhibits that happy adaptation to its purpose which is the characteristic of all successful achievements; and its hundreds of daily visitors come and go with a regularity which can only be the result of a talent for organization.

It may be the limited space already referred to, or it may be the neat fittings and the divisions of the walls and ceiling which somehow convey a passing thought of the cabin of a first-class passenger vessel; but this idea is more probably to be traced to a compartment formed at the upper end of the room, which is reached by a step, and bears a singular resemblance to the steward's pantry. In fact it is the steward's pantry, and those admitted to visit it will see its walls glistening with bottles, decanters, glasses, tankards, and table appurtenances, all neatly arranged on shelves; will see also marble sideboards of a foot or so in width; will see Cheshire and Stilton in cut on a centre table, and a spotless bread-bin to contain a portion of the day's consumption.

The ceiling of this compartment is of ground-glass, and from the shadows which flit across it, it is evident that there is a room above with a ground-glass floor, a surmise which is verified on our being invited to inspect the kitchen, which turns out to be the place in question. And a light, clean, compact, well-ordered kitchen it is, surely with some magical contrivance amongst its appurtenances for enabling the cooks to do so much in a

small space. Everything is so quietly managed that one may hear the click of the jack or the turning of the spit at the great fireplace which makes one side of the room, and where joints and poultry turn in appetizing variety. As might be expected, Izant's can spare time to be gravely courteous to such fair visitors as find themselves by accident in the City at dinner time; and here is a clean, light, bright, and tight little dining-room at their especial service, above which, in the topmost story, is a very gem of a smoking-room, so spotless and airy, with such bright ornamentation of coloured glass in its windows, and such a sense of ventilation from its high glazed roof, that smoking there would seem to be elevated into one of the fine arts. We fancy that there are but few habitués of this department, however, for every day and all day long the human tide flows in and out of Izant's at intervals of about forty minutes. The visitors come and eat and go their ways. Very diverse ways some of them are, for with clerks and brokers and ordinary men of business are mingled some venerable capitalists who have long ago found out the comfort of such an orderly retreat, and take their plain cut of roast or boiled before going home to their big houses, where they might, if they liked, dine off silver, and have their wine handed to them by a tall footman. It may be imagined what walls and ramparts of quartern bricks, French loaves, and penny rolls, what mounds of mutton, what bulwarks of beef, what piles of poultry, are consumed each day by this army of diners; and yet, as each separate dinner comes down on the descending slide in the corner by the steward's cabin, the head waiter is equal to the occasion, and with a talent for administration perfectly marvellous receives each dish and directs it to its proper destination. He is a great man, that head waiter, and, except that all the attendants at Izant's wear clean white blouses, would remind one equally of what the head of a government should be, and of a rural dean. On reflection, the latter resemblance is most last-

ing in our fancy. He might be a dean, say taking a walk with his gardening coat on; and he has a self-reliant and yet pensive air of intoning the bill of fare which is infinitely impressive. The way in which he says to each new arrival—'Roast beef, boiled pork, hashed mutton, Irish stew, boiled fowls, roast goose, haricot,' is inexpressibly touching, and the tone of his voice indicates a repose, a dignified calm in which we trace the presiding influence of the place affecting all those who look to him as an example. There is no hurry, there is even almost an affectation of leisure which enhances the promptitude, without which Izant's would soon become a byword and a reproach.

No little of this influence, however, may be attributed to the venerable proprietor himself* or to his son, a fresh, healthy-looking gentleman, who might well have ridden across country before the day's business began. Either father or son are on daily duty from the steward's cabin to the door—quick of eye but slow and sparing of speech, and with a courteous word ready to make the reckoning and to take the customary penny (there are no waiters' fees, and we should be sorry to offer any such liberty to our ecclesiastical friend) of each departing guest.

Out of the hundreds to whom Izant's means a daily dinner consisting of a cut from any one of three or four well-cooked wholesome joints, fresh vegetables, and a liberal allowance of bread, there must be scores to whom every shilling is an object. When to the dinner we have mentioned is added a slice of cheese and a glass of beer, there is *change* out of that shilling, and surely no more need be said of one of the principal, though not the only one, of those establishments which represent Dining in the City.

For ourselves, we found that of the three and sixpence already mentioned there remained a bright fat florin with which to spend the evening.

T. A.

* This was penned before the recent death of Mr. Izant, sen.

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN ABSENT MAN.

By TOM SLENDER.



THERE is nothing more absurd than the mistakes into which those who are afflicted with what is called 'absence of mind' continually fall. I call it an affliction, for it really is one; and it is also a disease which, if left to itself, will increase till its encroachments paralyse all other faculties of the mind. I was once conspicuous among all my friends for this unfortunate disposition of mind. How it grew upon me I can scarcely tell. On looking back I perceive that there were indications of it in my earliest child-

hood. I was fond of building castles in the air, of dwelling in imagination upon scenes and events which had no reality in them. I conjured up a world of my own; I peopled it with characters of my own creating; I dwelt in a kind of fairy land far away from the life which surrounded me; I liked to be alone and to be left to myself, unmolested by contact either with other children or my elders. In my walks I would keep aloof from all my companions and attendants, and converse in a language almost of my own with

imaginary companions and associates. I was called ungenial, odd, eccentric, morose, idle, and dreamy; but all these hard names could not take me out of myself. I was living an inner life that had no sympathy with and no counterpart in the realities around me. Children have a wonderful talent for investing things, places, and people with charms and qualities they do not possess, and can with a marvellous facility convert their dearest friends into cruel stepmothers and gigantic ogres; but then they need the companionship of others in order to effect this transformation, which is so complete and, in a certain sense, so real, that terror and anxiety are accurately depicted when any of these awful personages assume an aspect of wrath. With me it was different. I needed no companionship; I avoided it, and my earthly paradise was shared by no familiar friend that had any existence. I would retire to some corner by myself to dream away my young life. At the time I was not myself aware that I was unlike other children, though I was painfully conscious of being bored when I was compelled to associate with those of my own age; and whenever the ordeal was over I rushed off with increased delight to my corner, where, magician-like, I summoned into my presence the creatures of my imagination. The same habit continued in after years, though necessarily with more interruption and with a considerable change in the subject of my day-dreams. I was a puzzle to my masters, for I was not deficient in ability, and yet I never did myself justice, for my thoughts were often miles away from the matter which ought to have engaged them. As time went on the habit became more and more confirmed, and I was noted amongst all my fellows as *the absent man* of their acquaintance. There is nothing more fatal to a young man than to be considered eccentric. The character for eccentricity interferes with his success, while it at the same time conveys a tacit dispensation from the performance of duties which are supposed to be incumbent upon all who are of rational mind;

and this exemption tends to confirm a pernicious habit, while it disqualifies him in the opinion of all practical men for any occupation or office which requires promptitude, accuracy, and energy of thought and will. From never taking much interest in the events of the day I became at last scarcely cognizant of those features and peculiarities which constitute the difference between existing things. I was in some respects like a blind man, the eye of my mind being blinded to much that was observable to men of the meanest capacity; and it was only by a painful effort that I could concentrate my attention upon any given subject. Like a man who has accustomed himself to the dark, and to whom a ray of light becomes positively painful, I actually suffered acutely from the exertion which was required of me when I had to consider and decide upon any matter of business. The ordinary duties of a landed proprietor were distasteful to me, inasmuch as they interrupted my day-dreams; and even those which were not devoid of interest were neglected by my forgetfulness and utter incapacity for business. If I made an appointment I was more likely to forget it than not, or, with a vague impression that I had bound myself to do something at a given time and place, set off in a wrong direction long after the appointed time. If an important letter had to be written, and I had, after much difficulty, accomplished the unwelcome task, I was sure to carry the letter in my pocket for two or three days; or if two letters were written on the same day I infallibly put them into their wrong envelopes. In short, if a mistake could be made I was sure to make it; and as time went on I found that my friends were always trying to provide against my mistakes by taking me and my affairs under their especial care and protection.

I can well remember an absurd and amusing instance which occurred, and which will serve to show how 'absence of mind' had grown upon me. I had not been at all well, and for some days was not

allowed to leave my room, in which I took the simple meals that were allowed to me. Instead of dinner I was only allowed tea in the evening, with a very moderate supply of toast. On the occasion to which I refer my mother and sisters had gone down to dinner after having satisfied themselves that I had everything I wanted. Left alone by the fire with my teapot and kettle, which 'murmured its fairy song' on the hob, I began to dream as usual, till I remembered that I ought to pour some of the boiling water into the teapot. This I did very properly, and then again subsided into my dreamy existence, from which I was presently roused by the entrance of one of my sisters, bearing in her hand a plateful of a pudding which was a great favourite of mine. She started, screamed, and nearly dropped the plate at seeing me.

'Tom!' she exclaimed, 'what have you done?'

'Done? I? done? what?' I responded; and what had I done? I had not touched my tea, had not moved since I poured the water into the teapot; but the cause of my sister's alarm was soon made clear when she directed my attention to the fact that I had made teapot and kettle change places. The silver teapot was simmering half on the hob and half on the fire, discoloured and spoiled, and the kettle was on the tablecloth, on which it made its impression with most unquestionable distinctness. My mother soon made her appearance, after my sister had returned to her and had reported progress, and chided me well. But that was not attended with more serious results than the damage done to the silver teapot and the tablecloth. Other instances of my absence of mind have been followed by consequences of a much graver kind. I have delayed the promised assistance to a poor tenant till he was carried off to prison for debt; I have neglected to summon the doctor as I promised to do on my ride homewards, and the life of the poor invalid has been nearly lost; I have to record against myself that, with good abilities and abundant means of usefulness, I have wasted

many years of my life; and that, without any evil intent or grudge or ill will against any, I have done as much harm as many a man bent on mischief. I have profited no one and have impaired my own energies; and though I have now overcome my unfortunate habit to a certain extent, I feel that I never can be what I might have been, and am still conscious of a certain listlessness which weakens all my actions. I could moralise for ever upon the injurious effects of day-dreaming if I were writing an essay upon the subject; but perhaps some of the many instances in which I have suffered considerable annoyance from 'absence of mind' may amuse others and serve to induce them to avoid the habits which lead to it.

When I was about five-and-twenty, or it may be a little younger, I was invited to spend a week or ten days in the house of 'a great man,' who is one of the most influential of his party and perhaps the most gifted man of the time. His son was my college friend, and had often pressed me to pay him a visit, which I had promised to do again and again, but was as often prevented by some unforeseen circumstance. At last, on the occasion of a musical festival in the neighbouring town, I found myself at Broseley Hall, which was filled with a large assemblage of persons bent, like myself, upon hearing the most celebrated singers of the day. On my first arrival the novelty of the scene, the many strange faces, the restraint which a new place and a certain awe of my host forced upon me, compelled me to be more recollected, and I conducted myself very much like other people, only, I should imagine, I was duller than most. After I became more at my ease I relapsed into my old habits, and soon made myself conspicuous for my idiosyncrasy. I never could, without a great effort, manage to be in time for dinner. Why I cannot tell, but dressing-time always was specially a dream-time; and though there was nothing elaborate in my toilet, I always consumed a considerable time in it. On the occasion to which I refer, and which even

now at this distance of time makes me hot with shame, I had dawdled more than usual, and was roused by the loud clang of the dinner-bell to greater alacrity. I hurried on my coat and waistcoat, snatched up my pocket-handkerchief, and rushed down stairs into the drawing-room, where a considerable number of the guests were already assembled round a good blazing wood fire. Somewhat relieved at finding that I was not too late, I crept quietly into a vacant space before the fire, and stood there gazing into the logs of burning wood and answering such questions as were put to me. I soon became conscious of a lull in the conversation, and of the fact that I was, for some reason, the observed of all beholders. First one and then another looked down at my feet, shrugged their shoulders, and tittered. Roused, annoyed, and wondering, I felt inclined to resent what appeared to be such unwarrantable bad manners. What could be the matter with my feet? They were not ugly even if they were not beautiful: they were not deformed. I wore shoes and stockings like the rest of the world, and as I always hated whatever is called 'loud' in dress, I felt sure I could not have done anything to provoke observation or remark. Seizing a favourable opportunity when the conversation was resumed and attention was, or appeared to be, diverted from me, I looked down stealthily at my own feet to see what there could be to praise or blame. Imagine, then, my horror when I found my feet stockinged and encased in red morocco slippers! What could I do? I could only retreat into the back-ground and escape as quickly as possible to my room, where I found my neglected silk stockings on the table, where they had been carefully placed by the servant, and my shoes warming themselves before the fire. In shame and confusion I put them on and returned to the drawing-room, which I found empty, and, provoked with myself and every one else, I found my way into the dining-room and to an empty place which had been left for me. I was chaffed considerably upon my stupidity, and

many were the inquiries whether my feet had suffered from cold.

In the same house, and during the same visit, I made another mistake which was infinitely more distressing. On one of the vacant days when no one went to the festival, I sauntered at leisure over the gardens, which are celebrated throughout England, and then returned to the house, intending to dream away an hour or two in my room. After I had mounted the stairs I took by accident the wrong turn, which led me into a passage or corridor exactly similar to the one which led to my room. The doors of the rooms were similarly placed and were the same in number. I opened a door, found a comfortable room which I did not doubt to be my own, and sat down in an easy chair by the fire and was soon enveloped in one of my usual mists of thought. After the lapse of some time, I cannot tell how long, the door opened and somebody walked in, shut the door, gave one startled exclamation, and rushed out again. I concluded it was the housemaid, and, having been somewhat roused by the exclamation, called to her to come in, and assured her that she did not disturb me. No notice having been taken of my assurance, I again relapsed into my wonted habit; and again, after a while, the door opened slightly and some one looked in and then retreated. This opening and shutting of the door was not sufficient to interrupt the current of my thoughts, and I still occupied the chair by the fire, when I felt the presence of a hand on my shoulder which effectually called me back to myself. Startled by the interruption, I looked up and saw the lady of the house looking at me sternly and inquiringly as she said—

'Mr. Slender, what are you doing, and why are you here?'

'Why am I here?' I replied. 'Why, is not this my room?'

'Your room?' said Lady—. 'No, indeed! Look around you and see if it looks like your room! This is Miss —'s room.'

I did look around me, and then, for the first time, saw an elaborately belaced toilet table which might

alone have sufficed to prove that I was not in my own room. I stammered forth apologies, entreated Lady — to explain my mistake to Miss —, if she was aware of it, or to conceal it from her altogether if she were happily ignorant of it. Lady —, who had heard before from her son of my reputation as an 'absent man,' understood the real cause of my mistake, and carried me off, in the most good-natured way, to her own room, where she read me a lecture on the subject, and insisted upon the necessity of my attacking the real root of the evil with energy and decision. She told me that Miss — had gone into her room and found me ensconced in her chair, and that she had sought Lady —'s interference. I was made to apologize in *propria persona* to Miss —. That was the penalty which Lady — insisted on my paying; and during the remainder of my visit I behaved like other people, and for the time put a strong curb upon my dreamy habits. But I can assure you that it caused me considerable annoyance, and I could see that I had given serious offence to the ladies of the party, who did not feel themselves safe from my intrusion into their rooms.

Another instance occurred which distressed me considerably at the time, though it led to an intimacy which has never diminished; and this is perhaps the solitary instance I can record of any benefit that has resulted from 'absence of mind.' It happened many years after the event which I have just related. My father lived in Grosvenor Square, and since his second marriage, as I inherited a considerable fortune from my mother, who was his first wife, I rented a small house in the neighbourhood of Berkeley Square. We were on excellent terms, and my only unmarried sister was a bond of union between us. Scarcely a day passed without our meeting, and I was always welcome. It happened that my father was exceedingly anxious that I should meet an old friend of his who had recently returned from India, where he had passed many years of his life and had amassed a large fortune. He and my father had been great

friends, and their meeting again, after the lapse of so long an interval, revived all recollections in which my mother's memory bore a very prominent part. It was on this account that my father was particularly anxious that I should dine with him, and, in fixing the day, had consulted me as to my engagements so that I might not fail him. On the appointed day I received a note from my father to remind me of my engagement and of the dinner hour. The dinner hour had struck when my servant came into my room to say that the brougham had been waiting some time at the door and that I should be late if I did not set off at once. I was scarcely more than half dressed, and was annoyed with myself for my want of punctuality. I hurried as much as I could, jumped into my brougham, and told the coachman to drive on. It so happened that at the next door there was also a dinner going on, and, in my impatience to arrive at my father's house, I pulled the check-string sharply, and getting out, rushed up the steps through the open door into the dining-room, where a large party was assembled, and took possession of a vacant chair. I was absorbed in my thoughts even while I was provoked with myself, and took very little heed of anybody or anything. The only thing that I afterwards seemed to remember, was the silence which immediately followed my arrival, and which, if I considered the matter at all, I probably attributed to my father's annoyance, which would only have increased my own embarrassment. After a while my neighbour addressed me, and called my attention to a picture which hung over the chimney piece opposite to me. I looked up and saw, not the beautiful portrait of my mother by Sir Thomas Lawrence, which is similarly situated in my father's house, but a very exquisite painting of fruit by Sneider. I was too perplexed to answer the question which had been put to me, but was sufficiently aroused to summon courage to look cautiously round the room, which in no single feature reminded me of my father's. I then glanced with hesitation and an un-

defined dread round the table, and at once saw that I had entered the wrong house by mistake, and that my host was my father's next-door neighbour. I rose and apologized for my intrusion, which was accounted for by my having made my coachman pull up too soon, by my finding the house-door opened and the servants ready to receive me and ushering me into the dining-room, where I, of course, expected to find my father and his guests. All this occurred so naturally, that no mistake suggested itself to my mind; and it was not till my attention was forcibly directed to the picture that the truth began to dawn upon me. I rushed off to my father's house, where I was greeted with reproaches, which I soon silenced by telling them what had happened to me, and how kindly our next-door neighbour had pressed me, but in vain, to stay and dine with him and take the vacant place. I raised a good laugh against myself, and was more inclined to converse with others than I might otherwise have

been had everything gone on in the ordinary way. My father's Indian friend looked kindly at me as he said, 'Well, Tom, had you seen what I once saw happen through the forgetfulness of an absent man, you would never rest till you had cured yourself of the habit.' Pressed by us all, he briefly told us that a person who had been condemned to die, suffered that extreme penalty through the inadvertence of a man who forgot to send the reprieve in time to delay the execution. 'That man, Tom,' said he, 'has never lifted up his head since, and has resigned a post of considerable importance and emolument because he considered himself disqualified for it by "absence of mind."'

I am now an elderly man, and happily can speak of all this as a state of mind that is past. I am not what I ought to have been; but, having cured myself, I can afford to speak of the recollections of an absent man, and laugh with you at the absurdities of which I have been guilty.

PHASES OF LONDON SOCIETY.

No. I.

The Three Furies.

ALCETO LOQUITUR.

LET politicians quell the storm
Of working men and lodgers,
And let the men discuss reform,
And growl at Beales and Odgers;
We girls don't care for tailors' strikes,
Or know what trick of trade is,
But surely every woman likes
The champion of the ladies.

Then let us seek our spokesman out,
And lay our case before him,
He'll plead our cause without a doubt,
For women never bore him;
John Stuart Mill will fight for us—
Oh! how his ears must tingle!
The widow grievance he'll discuss,
The sorrows of the single.

MEGERA LOQUITUR.

With your proposal I agree,
And here's a crisis fitting;
Just turn your eyes towards that tree,
Where Lady Ongar's sitting.

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defined dread moved the table, and at once saw that I had entered the wrong house by mistake, and that my host was not father's next-door neighbour. I was not disappointed for my mistake, which was occasioned by the way through which my confusion had led me, but by my leaving my mother's apartment and the drawing-room to search the street entrance for the late distinguished visitor, who was expected to call that night and his guests. As this accident occurred, naturally, that all business suggested itself to my mind, and it was not till my attention was finally directed to the picture that the truth began to dawn upon me. I rushed off to my father's house, where I was greeted with reproaches which I was silenced by hearing those words had happened to me, and how laughable was next-door neighbour's self-reproach was, but in vain to stay with them for a day and take the next day. I found a great many people, and was with difficulty able to escape from them.

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PHASES OF LONDON SOCIETY.

No. I.

The Three Series.

ALBINO SOCIETY.

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Of working men and lodgers,
And let the men discuss reform,
And growl at Beales and Ongers;
We girls don't care for tailors' strikes,
Or know what trick of trade is,
But surely every woman likes
The champion of the ladies.

Then let us seek our spokesman out
And lay our case before him,
He'll plead our cause without a doubt,
For women never bore him;
John Stuart Mill will fight for us—
Oh! how his ears must tingle!
The woe grievance he'll discuss,
The sorrows of the single.

MEDUSA SOCIETY.

With your proposal I agree,
And here's a crisis fitting;
Just turn your eyes towards that tree,
Where Lady Ongar's sitting.



Design by the Hon. Alfred Russel

THAMES OF LONDON SOCIETY, 1861

A widow scarce a month ago—
Your widow's heart soon hardens—
Surrounded now by every beau
Who's strolling in the gardens.

The old, old tale of 'fast and loose'—
A flirt, a match, a marriage;
She popped her head into the noose,
For Ongar's coin and carriage.
Who cared that he was lame and slow?
She skittish?—off they started;
Miss Caroline was Lady O—,
And Charley broken-hearted.

A year or so of pique and pain—
Life's ordinary phases—
Her ladyship is free again,
His lordship 'neath the daisies.
A silly crowd she sits among,
Who gather round to parley,
And Lady O—, who's rich and young,
Again makes eyes at Charley.

TISIPHONE LOQUITUR.

That's very true, and still, my dear,
We're powerless to resist her,
Although the other night, I hear,
Young Arthur Alwyn kissed her.
Her hair is painted gold, and yet
Her badge is labelled on it;—
Confound that chapeau Antoinette
Beneath her pretty bonnet!

Some say her teeth are not her own;
And those who scandals rake up
Will tell you, when the wind has blown
Her cheeks have lost their 'make-up.'
And only, love, the other day,
I heard some ladies mention—
'Good gracious! there's Professor Jay
Is paying her attention!'

OMNES.

Well, let us flock to Mr. Mill,
He's spoken for us often,
And beg him to propose a bill,
And try his heart to soften.
But if he fails to hit the mark,
Or shelves our deputation,
We'll revolutionize the Park,
And agitate the nation.

Our proposition, clear as day,
No trickery is shielding;
For why should they have all the play,
And we have all the fielding?
Society much needs reform;
Great faults have small beginnings;
Before the widows follow theirs
Let spinsters have an innings.

CLARENCE CAPULET.

BEAUTIFUL MISS JOHNSON.

The Experiences of a Guardsman.

CHAPTER II.

'I NEVER was more surprised in my life.'

This was my Aunt Georgie's comment upon the scene which I have described, the morning after the memorable party, at which 'The Lady of Stonecross Moor,' as I found the beautiful stranger was called in those parts, had played so conspicuous a rôle.

It was at breakfast the following morning that the remark was volunteered. I had purposely avoided the subject, knowing that it was the surest way to unseal the lips, which only perversity could render silent upon the subject which I had nearest at heart.

'I shall have a laugh against Nelly, now,' she went on; 'she always boasts of her freedom from "young ladyisms," as she calls them; to go and faint right off, without the shadow of an excuse, except the heat of the room; and it was not hot at all,—was it, dear?' she added, turning to my uncle, who was absently decapitating an egg.

'Not in the least,' was the worthy gentleman's reply, who had never been known to contradict his wife, or to agree unconditionally with any one else; 'it was a very pleasant temperature, I thought.'

'It was a good thing on one account; that fainting fit saved her from the madcap ride across the moor at night,' said my aunt, reflectively; 'but it also proves she is not so strong as she makes out; and it cannot be safe for her to be riding about the country so much by herself.'

'We must send the mare over to the cottage this morning, by-the-by,' Uncle Reginald remarked, rising as he said so to ring the bell, when Aunt Georgie stopped him, mischievously observing—

Perhaps Harry will ride her

over, and inquire after Miss Johnson at the same time.'

'Not I,' I answered, promptly; 'I know what it is, riding a lady's favourite horse. I had rather not undertake the responsibility; but I will drive you over this afternoon, if you like. I thought Tartar was a little beyond your management yesterday.'

'I shall be proud of your escort; and it will be something for you to do—keep the time from hanging so heavily on your hands; and I have no "party" for your entertainment to-night,' she added, with a merry glance across the table at her husband, who encouraged her in her mockeries, and loved to hear her rally me upon what she was pleased to call my swelldom, in contradistinction to the simplicity of life at Tower Moor, to which place he was wedded, heart and soul, and whose praises he loved to hear sounded on the lips of his young wife.

'What time will you go?' I inquired, as I took my gun and whistled the dogs to accompany me in a morning ramble over the moor, which stretched a brown and purple splendour to the foot of the distant hills, and which I had learnt to love for its own sake, in those bright late autumn days.

'Oh, after luncheon; any time will do—about four, perhaps. Miss Johnson will give us some tea—that is a London fashion to which I entirely surrender.'

'You manage to transplant plenty of exotics into your wild soil, I think; you are not genuine, you know. You go in for rustic simplicity, and that sort of thing, but you are very Sybarites at heart.'

'Well, go and shoot us some snipe, and don't talk nonsense. Remember I shan't wait.'

Before setting out, however, with the natural propensity for lounging

which comes with the enjoyment of the 'fragrant weed,' I went round to the stables, and paid my morning visit to the horses, and had my morning gossip with the old coachman, who in early days had taught me to ride on a wild little Exmoor pony that his keen eye had selected from a herd, and which had been handed down from one to another in a family of boys, peerless amongst ponies to the last day of his life. My attention was immediately attracted by the beauty of the black mare Brittomart, who looked round at the intruder with a fiery, questioning eye, which betokened a spirit as untamed as that which fired the heart of her mistress. I was going up to her in the stall, until warned by the old coachman 'not to go anigh her.' 'Look here,' he said, showing two very deep and ugly dents in the door of the loose-box, 'she's very free with her heels, she is; she's not particular either, but she's a real beauty to look at, and a real good one to go—that she is, Mr. Harry.'

'Who is going back with her?' I asked, knocking the ashes out of my cigar, and pretending not to give much heed to the matter.

'James is,' was the reply; 'it's a good three mile across the moor, and five by the road. It's a wild place, sir, for a young lady to live at by herself, and it must be lonesome enough at times.'

'Lonesome indeed; but does she live there quite alone?'

'There's the gentleman, to be sure, but folks do say that he is not right in his mind. He's queer, at all events—no one ever sees him.'

'Her father, I suppose he is,' I said, with as much indifference of manner as I could assume.

'No; uncle they du say—but no one knows much about them. The young lady du ride like a bird; and she be a pretty one, tu, she be,' he added, reflectively, in the Devonshire dialect, which I have always loved for his sake, and now for the sake of those bright days at Tower Moor, over which the halo of romance was about to descend like a cloud, and towards which I was walking so unconsciously on, when,

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under the pretence of shooting snipe, I was indulging all sorts of day-dreams about the lovely stranger who had confided to me her need of a friend.

I cannot say I was, on that particular morning, keen in the pursuit of game; and long before the hour appointed by my aunt for our drive, I returned to the rectory, followed by the dogs, whose wistful questioning glances had in them something which partook largely of the nature of reproach.

'A pretty sportsman you!' they seemed to express in derision, like that of their lovely mistress of the *blond* 'London swell'; and to rid myself of these solemn monitors, I took them round to the kennel and shut them in, eyes and all; went round to the drawing-room windows, which opened on the lawn, and across the threshold of which, when the weather was fine and warm, Mrs. Reginald Gwynne was in the habit of flitting, at least five times to every hour that passed over her head.

She was there, in her white dress, and with her fine eyes mocking at me then.

'I shall not be ready for an hour,' she exclaimed at once; 'what can have brought you back so soon?'

'Soon? I have been out five hours at the very least; but you are prodigal of time in these parts. I have not learnt to live at a foot-pace yet.'

'The excitement of my party has been too much for you. You are dying to go to call on Miss Johnson, "the Lady of Stonecross Moor"; confess it, and I will order Tartar round at once; but sloop to subterfuge, and I will have my revenge.'

'I have already had mine,' was my reply. 'Your wild girl of the woods is but a town-bred imposition, after all. Your beautiful stranger confessed to me last night that she did me the honour of recollecting having met me in town; and she knew that I was in the Guards. What becomes of your theory now, Aunt Georgie?'

'It is "all right," according to your favourite expression, my dear nephew; my theory is, that life is

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not wholly unbearable down here in the wilds of North Devon; and it is confirmed by the choice of your beautiful lady, who has come to reside here of her own free will. She has a will, too, I can tell you, and knows better than most women how to carry it out.'

'So I should suppose. Are you ready for the pony carriage?'

'Not quite. I want to see your uncle, before I go out for the afternoon, to remind him not to sit in wet things. He has been over the black moor to see a sick child, and it is impossible to avoid bogs there,' she added, as she gazed meaningly on the immaculate freshness of my sportsman's garb; 'by-the-by, where are the snips?'

'In the bogs on the black moor, for all I know, or care—my gun was a mere excuse for a walk this morning. I went on an exploring expedition.'

'To Stone-cross Moor—I'll bet a pair of gloves!' exclaimed my aunt, clasping her hands together, of which she was very vain, and which were never *gantée* in any but the most delicate Paris skins—'you're under the spell; I saw it all last night.'

'I cannot believe that any woman can ride that road alone, without danger at any time; but at night it is incredible that she can do it at all. Was your friend, Miss Johnson, in earnest in her assertion, or was it part of the play?'

'She was in earnest of course. She is never anything else. She is the most earnest woman I know,—and quite the most beautiful,' she added after a pause. 'The most beautiful creature I ever saw. What do you say on that score, Mr. Gwynne?'

'That I never contradict a lady. If I make one clause and say the most beautiful but one, it need not make my uncle uncomfortable; it is permitted to make love to one's aunt.'

'*Faute de mieux*—of course it is. But here comes Reginald; so you can order Tartar round. I shall be ready directly I have seen after the dear old man.'

○ Tartar was the handsomest and

the most cantankerous pony that it has ever been my lot to drive. His shape was symmetry itself; his head a picture; and his nose might have been inserted into a Sèvres china teacup, without injury to the delicate ware. Aunt Georgie could do as she pleased with him, as far as petting, or handling him was concerned; for he was a high-bred chevalier at heart; but as for driving him, that was *autre chose*; and if I trembled for her neck, every time that I saw her laughingly attempt it (for she was not much of a whip), it was because none knew better than I the resolute strength of the tiny mouth, in its panoply of burnished steel, when the little demon was determined to pull.

'Can you drive?' my aunt mockingly demanded of me, as she arranged the flow of her ample skirts at my side. 'I assure you,' she added, 'that the roads about here are what any one but North Devon country folks like ourselves would decidedly call *curieuse*.'

She laid a funny little stress upon the last syllable of the last word, as though challenging some remark, or repartee, on the part of her dutiful nephew; but finding that I remained silent, quite engrossed, to tell the truth, with the pickle of a pony, she went on to say, for my edification—

'That word has become a by-word with your uncle and myself, since the very ludicrous scene which first introduced it into these parts. Shall I tell you a story, as children say, and shall it begin with "Once upon a time?"'

It was a very pleasant sensation, that of having a pretty woman prattling beside me, both of us borne along in a fairy equipage through the loveliest scenery in England, in search of another woman who was more than pretty, and the sound of whose name, unromantic and commonplace as it might appear to the uninitiated, fell like music on my appreciative ear.

If there was one thing in the world, too, that I enjoyed more than another, it was one of Aunt Georgie's stories. She had a quaint way of her own of relating them, that was

to me irresistible; for her nature still partook largely of the childish element, which has a grace and freshness of its own, where it is preserved unsullied in the breast of a beautiful and fascinating woman.

'It has one great drawback, however,' she used to say, when talking of this attribute in reference to herself. 'I can never make any one properly afraid of me. People will speak of me, I know, as "only little Mrs. Gwynne," although I am Reginald's wife; and so they would still speak if I had written the best and wisest book in the world. Am I such a fool? or what is it? Why won't people be afraid of me, Reginald?'

'Don't talk nonsense, my love,' was my uncle's invariable reply to this question. He did not exactly understand what she meant, or see that the ease and familiarity which her own innocent gaiety and freedom of manner invited, was thus sometimes pettishly resented, as out of keeping with the dignified position which she claimed, not on her own individual merits, but, as she proudly expressed herself, as 'her husband's wife.'

This was the story which served to beguile the road, as far as it presented a tolerably practicable surface, which was for the space of little more than a quarter of a mile.

'We sometimes have people of note, distinguished people, even down here, at Tower Moor. Your uncle is, as you know, passionately fond of music; and last year, he invited a German professor, an old friend, to stay a month with us; and of course during that month we gave a "party," as it is our custom to do, when our retreat is honoured with the presence of personages of distinction. Most of the same people came that we had the other night. Miss Johnson rode over. Sir John and Lady Bull drove in their Noah's Ark, with the pair of mammoth horses, which Miss Johnson declares ought to be sent to Professor Owen or Mr. Darwin as specimens of a race supposed to have been long extinct, bringing with them as the musical genius of the family, Miss Althea,

armed with "her piece," as she calls it, which is the terror of the party-giving part of the community for miles round, the same which she hammered through last night, when I longed to put my fingers in my ears. I shall certainly stuff them with cotton wool the next time such an infliction is threatened.

'Well, on this occasion it was my amusement to watch the expression of countenance of the galvanized Herr—whose eyes opened wider and wider as the young woman pounded my poor piano with the muscular strength of a female athlete. At last it was over, and a silence that might have been felt reigned supreme over the awe-stricken assembly. Even your uncle, whose kindness of heart generally brings him to the front on such occasions, was tongue-struck, and unequal to the usual complimentary speech—and Miss Althea looked sulky and returned discomfited to her place. Sir John, who you must know is very proud of this performance, was not likely to allow the slight to pass unnoticed. Indeed, I believe that he imagined the distinguished foreigner was struck dumb with amazement, and that he only required a little encouragement to deliver himself of what Sir John himself would call "a handsome compliment." He strutted up to him at once, with that air of pompous benignity which only an English baronet can assume, and said in broken English, which some people, by-the-by, affect when talking to a foreigner—

"Vel, sare, vat tink you of dat? Qu'en pensez vous, monsieur? Tell me candidly—comment le trouvez vous—How do you find it, eh?"

'The poor Herr, thus driven figuratively and literally into a corner, for the ponderous form of the baronet oscillated before him like that of a foundered dray-horse, racked his poor brains, as he afterwards told us, for an appropriate compliment that would not be entirely untruthful (he was a German, you will bear in mind; a Frenchman would have had no such difficulty), and at last he said loud enough to be heard by every one in the room—

"'Mein Herr Bool, I finds it "*curieuse*."

'Was it not capital? The poor man told me afterwards that he had heard the word applied to good wine in England, and that the other and more general interpretation of it flashed across his mind in connection with Miss Althea's performance. He thought, therefore, it would do "*von vey or de oder*," he explained to us apologetically and not without an inward conviction that he had committed himself in the eyes of the terrible Herr Bool, who had borne down upon him with such a ponderous bulk of patronage and inquiry. But it was his gravity, and the way in which he emphasized the last word of the sentence, that threw us into what a fine writer would call mental convulsions. I caught Miss Johnson's eye at the moment, and if she had not remained as grave as a judge, I should have behaved worse than I did.

'By-the-by, Harry,' Aunt Georgie added, making an attempt to turn the conversation, and, as she would have expressed it, mentally jerking the springs as she did so, 'you have never told me after all what you think of my friend Miss Johnson.'

'There can be but one opinion with regard to her beauty, if that is what you mean.'

'Not exactly: beauty, although a great thing, and a very prominent attraction even in her, is not by any means, in my opinion, her principal one. She is so delightfully original, and so very clever, that even I am forced sometimes reluctantly to admit that she is a little thrown away down here in these wilds. Now, take care, pray: if you throw Tartar down, I can never forgive you; and you are letting him have his own way entirely.'

'Good gracious!'

This last exclamation was wrung from my companion by a dislocating jolt into one of those ruts with which the frequenters of North Devon roads must be well acquainted, cut into the soft clay in the winter by the traffic of heavy waggons, and hardened into adamant by the summer sun, threaten-

ing the axles and springs of the carriages, and the necks and bones, to say nothing of the nerves, of the travellers who are determined to penetrate those lonely wilds.

'You are driving so carelessly, Harry,' urged my aunt, in plaintive accents. 'I shall not mention Miss Johnson again, if this is to be the consequence every time she becomes the subject of conversation.'

'She asked me if you had "told me all about her," as she expressed herself; and seemed a little surprised that you had not done so: she added that this would have been your way of negotiating a secret.'

'Ah, she is very clever, no doubt, and you are very severe; but, in return for this sauciness, I will leave you to find out "all about her" yourself, Mr. Gwynne. Henceforward my lips are sealed.'

This pretty threat was indeed carried out even to the strict letter of the law, for the next ten minutes, at the expiration of which we had arrived at the cottage honoured by being the abode of the beautiful stranger.

'She was out: had ridden over to Silverton, and was not expected back till late,' so the sulky-looking man who opened the door informed us, and who looked very much like a keeper disguised in livery.

'I should like to leave a note for her,' said Mrs. Gwynne, who seemed much disappointed at this hitch in the progress of her romance; and she made at the same moment a movement indicative of her intention of entering the house. But the stony-faced official did not even stand aside to let her pass, much less invite her to enter; and a shaggy mastiff, who had been looking with an eye of suspicion upon the intrusion of strangers, raised himself stiffly on his legs, and displayed an ugly row of teeth, giving utterance at the same time to a low, angry growl.

'Do not attempt to pass that brute, pray,' I observed, laying a detaining hand upon my aunt's arm, and leaving it an open question as to whether the remark was aimed at the human or the canine foe. 'If you have any message for Miss

Johnson, I will walk over to-morrow morning, and deliver it in person.'

As we drove away from the inhospitable door, I heard a man's voice, demanding in rough and surly tones 'Why the devil,'—some one whose name I did not catch, but which was, doubtless, that of the ill-mannered cur to whom we had addressed ourselves—'stood parleying there, and keeping the door open;' and I shuddered to think what the mysterious owner of that voice might be—mad—drunk—anything but old, failing, or imbecile, as report affirmed. That strident, ruffianly voice was not the utterance of one over whose faculties either age or second childhood had cast an obliterating veil. I felt Aunt Georgie tremble as the echo of it fell upon her ear; and for myself, a deep depression settled on me as I recalled it; and as, intuitively, the meaning of those ringing accents came home to me—you would not like to be me; you would not like to be condemned to stagnate here for life.'

'To stagnate, indeed!' I thought; 'that brilliant, beautiful nature;' and in consequence, as it was now evident, of some hidden shame. This father, uncle, brother, kinsman—this madman, drunkard, and, perhaps, criminal, was, I felt now, the thorn that pierced so deeply—that had wounded and poisoned her life. With the enthusiasm of youth I pledged myself, from that moment, to her service for life—or for death. The glance of those dark eyes had pierced, as the Romany song has it, 'my bosom's core,' which was, I could have added also with truth—

'A feat no eyes beneath the skies
Could e'er effect before.'

Aunt Georgie and I were both silent during the drive home. The same misgiving had overtaken us both; for she, too, had heard that startling voice, the companion of our beautiful friend's solitude, and had heard it for the first time.

CHAPTER III.

Tower Moor rectory presented great attractions that autumn for

the 'London swell,' as it was my aunt's pretty conceit to dub me.

I lingered on and on. I wrote to ask for an extension of leave, and not only asked, but obtained it. I was infatuated, spell-bound, or, as the vulgar (*alias* common) would have had it, hopelessly and madly 'in love.' In love even to the extent of being totally indifferent to the feeble chaff which the best fellow, but greatest dunce, in the regiment committed himself to paper to express for my peculiar and private edification.

My goddess had indeed exhibited herself to my adoring gaze under many different and even contradictory phases, and had proved to my fancy equally adorable in each and every one. Aunt Georgie had been merciless until the thing became serious; and then the tender, womanly side of her nature asserted itself, and she became the most gentle and the most sympathising of *confidantes*.

There was much in the nature of the intimacy which I had established with the lovely inmate of the moorland cottage to make such sympathy peculiarly grateful and refreshing; for there was a point at which we were both of us alike always turned, a mystery to which neither of us could afford a clue, a silence which we had never been encouraged to break, with regard to the social position, the antecedents, and even to the actual existence in the flesh of that terrible kinsman to whom the lady of Stonecross Moor was evidently devoting, if not sacrificing, the most precious years of youth.

She always spoke of herself as leading a solitary life, and Aunt Georgie often recounted to me how, in the first hours of their intimacy, the poor girl had laid her hand within hers, and had said, with the concentration of purpose which was the predominant expression in her beautiful face, 'if you take me at all, you must take me upon trust: and now,' she had added, with trembling accents, which sank deep into the tender heart, 'I am sadly in need of such a friend.'

This last clause was sufficient in itself to decide Mrs. Gwynne as to

the course which she would henceforth pursue. Too generous to admit a doubt where her affections were concerned, she accepted her position with a trust that simple pure natures can alone entertain; and curiosity, which is supposed to be a dominant force in the feminine breast, quailed beneath the lance of so noble an antagonist.

My uncle, too, was biased even to prejudice in favour of the fair stranger, who had taken the rectory by storm. As a man of the world, he recognized the high breeding of the woman; and as an artist, he admired in her the development of an art which he passionately loved. A narrower nature, indeed, than that of his wife's might have found cause for umbrage in his openly avowed admiration for this 'wild girl of the woods;' but in the unselfish purity of her own heart, she gloried in her husband's loyalty to her friend.

In all that was noble, her character rose above and beyond that childish element of which I have made mention before. Children are pure, innocent, loveable creatures; but the nobility, of which Aunt Georgie possessed an exceptional share, was a quality of maturer growth, for it could only have existed in the depths over which the current of human passions, in the full tide of human force, take their headlong and turbulent way.

Aunt Georgie was a woman in feeling to the very core—quick, impulsive, sensitive to the touch of praise, or to the faintest breath of depreciation, as the most brilliant or egotistic of her sex; but where she loved, so implicit was her trust, that to have shaken her faith there would have been to strike at the root of her life.

So it happened that the admiration of my reverend uncle for the beautiful stranger did but increase and strengthen the magical influence which her many fascinations exercised over the mind of his wife.

The next time I saw Miss Johnson, she was mounted, and at the cover-side, for the harvest had been over early, and cub-hunting had

already commenced. I had risen at an hour which, if recorded here, would raise an incredulous smile upon the lips of those 'very good fellows' whose cynicism lies perdu—(I was going to say, but, alas! there is but little cover for it there)—under the downy fringes of an incipient moustache.

The author of 'Guy Livingstone' has much to answer for, in making sneers as well as muscle predominate in his brilliant delineation of his lordly but vicious athlete. As Byron had to answer for the hundredfold impersonation of the morbid stamp of hero, with turn-down collars, and young-lady-like dread of the inroads of increasing flesh, so must this author stand responsible for the monstrous conception of modern fiction, in which the spirit of Mephistopheles animated the brawny bulk of a Hercules, and turns a cynic and a butcher out of the same mould, to the ungodly edification of the 'golden youth' of the nineteenth century.

At an *unusual* hour, then, not to put too fine a point upon the matter, I did then and there, at such a time, and in such a manner as herein stated and declared by me, Captain Gwynne, on such and such a day, uprise with, or before the dawn, and accompany my reverend uncle to the meet at the P—th Arms, of which the noble master had made the sporting parson, the Rector of Tower Moor, duly and courteously cognisant.

The grey mists were only just rolling themselves away, like the downy pillows from which night had lifted her waking head, and the dim horizon had only just become rosiely tender with the hues of dawn, when we espied a sprinkling of red-coats on a distant hill-side, and caught the first dropping notes of an old bell-mouthed hound, who was cheering the young ones gallantly on the line.

'Follow me,' said my uncle, eagerly; 'we will steal a march on them. See!' he added, almost in a whisper, and indicating some evidently well-known point with his whip, while his eyes were shining with a sportsman's love of his work,

'I know every inch of the line he'll take: follow me.'

'All right,' I exclaimed; 'go a-head;' and we pushed on over the rough hill-side, to where the precipitous side of a hanging cover dropped, as it were, out of its very lap, to dip its fringed eyelids into the rocky bed of the stream below. On the edge of a ridge, however, which still intervenes between us and the point we aimed at, stood two figures, which looked statue-like, or graven, in their pure outlines against the silver hues of the morning sky. Cut sharply, as it were, out of a block of granite, was the faultless form of the fiery black mare, who, with taper ears cocked to the wind, stood motionless and grand, seemingly under the influence of a potent spell.

It was impossible to mistake either that attribute or the lithe form of the rider, who held the animal in such statue-like check.

'Miss Johnson,' my uncle said, raising his hat high, in respectful homage; to which salute the lady returned a most gracious bow, so delicately 'negotiated,' as she herself would have said, that it managed to include me in its courtesy, while the genial familiarity of the smile was exclusively, and pointedly, the property of the more grave, as well as reverend signor, the man who could boast that he was richer in such signs of grace than any other in North Devon—my envied and enviable uncle, the 'sporting parson' (as I somewhat illiberally dubbed him at this juncture) of Tower Moor.

Without speaking, and with the handle of her whip pressed against her lips, until they whitened under the eager signal for the perfect silence which she wished us to observe, she listened intently for a few minutes; then, with an impatient gesture, and exclaiming at the same time, 'We are all wrong: there is only one chance for us now!' she gave the mare her head and rode straight at the fence, and into the hanging cover before her, ere my uncle or I had got our horses again in hand, or had recovered from the effects which so dazzling a vision had worked upon our startled senses.

'Splendid!' was the reverend's exclamation, as, without further loss of time, he followed Diana's example, and cleared the fence gallantly himself, in emulation of the prowess of the beautiful girl who had thus obtained the prestige, hardly earned in any case, but well earned in this, of showing the sporting parson the way.

'Come on, Harry,' he said, tauntingly, and but for the vicious and wayward temper of the mare I was mounted on, for that adjuration there had been little need. I was willing enough, but the White Witch (the fairest but most impracticable of her sex it has ever been my fortune to back) refused the fence, and showed a decided propensity to mill, which maddened me so at that moment, that I dug my spurs deep into her tender and resentful sides. With a snort of defiance, and with a nostril blood-red with anger and shame, the White Witch now rose at the fence, and might in her fury have cleared that and ten feet of water beyond, with the energy which she threw into the bound. The next minute she and I were crashing through the cover formed of stunted oaks knotted and interlaced with the brambles of ten years' growth, in the wake of the gallant Brittomart, and of the well-seasoned hunter on which my uncle was holding his own by her side.

We heard them when we could not see them, and followed close in their wake, until we came upon them suddenly as they were checked, not turned, by one of the thicket-imbedded courses of a hill-side rivulet which offered a more difficult obstacle than a wide brook in an open country of grass lands.

'All right, Mr. Gwynne, hold hard!' said the voice of the siren, as, with an animated gesture, Diana turned in her saddle, and held up a warning hand to me. 'I see the dappled darlings; they are in the bed of the stream below. This is what I like, to see them work,' she added, with a smile of real quiet enjoyment, which showed that she was earnest in what she said. I see her now in the abandon of her excitement place her hand upon my

reverend uncle's arm, saying as she did so, 'Oh, Mr. Gwynne, is not this perfect?—is not this rare?'

What would I not have given to have had an appeal so enforced made to me!

Suddenly, with a cheery burst of music, the hounds were again upon the line, and the black mare responded to the call made upon her, as those respond who are coerced in the direction whither the hard rider will has gone before, and we are off. We had distanced the field by a master stroke of the fair huntress, and we had it all to ourselves. Fate was still more propitious, for at that moment we heard a voice of distress behind, proclaiming the loss of a shoe, on the part of the animal of happy memory, on which my good uncle had hoped to see the end of the run.

'Thank heaven!' I fear I exclaimed irreverently enough, as I pressed the White Witch to her black rival's side. For the first time during an acquaintance now of many weeks, I found myself with the object of my adoration alone.

Out on the open moor now we galloped on in the wake of the hounds side by side. It was a moment of exquisite enjoyment. The exhilarating exercise, the keen pure air of the moor, the merry music of the gallant pack, to which the thud of our own horse hoofs on the springing turf played a fitting accompaniment—all and each of these circumstances were potent adjuncts to the promptings of the mystic influence which I believe animated both our hearts. These are the moments, indeed, in which we live a lifetime in the twinkling of an eye. And these are the moments which will come back to us, seen through the medium of that long vista which is known to us as the valley of the shadow of death. As the senses melt into eternity, they will reflect the sunshine of their prime.

It is not on the yesterdays, still less on the to-morrows of life, that the lingering spirit loves to dwell. It is on the sunlight of the 'long agoes,' on moments of pure and ecstatic happiness like these I have attempted to describe, feeling as I

write the words how inadequate they are to paint the picture of which every son of Adam has the prototype and original in his own breast.

It was like all such moments—brief, transitory, meteor-like in its actual existence and realization. *An accident occurred.* An accident to my companion, every hair on whose head was precious in my sight. The gallant mare as she galloped put her foot into one of the rabbit holes with which that part of the moor, I afterwards found, was studded, and she and her rider crashed suddenly and with overwhelming violence to the ground.

Need I describe it? It was like all sudden accidents, such as all have either witnessed or experienced to whom the stakes of danger have been familiar from their youth; and of that particular danger which attends the ardent pursuit of sport: the crash—the roll—the smothered cry—the yielding girths—the fierce smiting of the dull earth with hoofs maddened by fear—the snort or groan on the part of the animal—the blood—the swoon—the agony on the part of the suffering soul; and last, not least, the stab of pain which shot into the heart with the sudden force of the conviction—'killed.'

What a fair face it was that lay so white and motionless on my sustaining arm! What a slender but cruel stain flowed from the temple wound, and trickled down the marble cheek! Was it anguish, or was it joy—was it a reflex from heaven, or a flash from hell, which made my heart throb and my eyes kindle as I pressed on those unconscious lips my first, my last, impassioned caress? I believed that she was dead, but I felt only that she had died in my arms, and that pure virgin vows, unspoken on earth but registered in heaven, had given me the right to press to my own those white, unresponding lips. The horses, riderless and snorting, galloped away over the open moor, and I stood alone with my helpless burden in my arms, without any sign or promise of human hand to our rescue in that terrible hour.

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I laid it gently down—the slight, graceful form, whose statue-like features were only equalled by the marble-like stillness of feature and expression; and after carefully pilowing my head upon a pillow covered with soft leather, I hastened to a moorland stream which I had noticed as I flew over it, in search of the health-giving elixir of life, so precious in its restoring qualities. I brought a large lead cup full of it, and dashed it over the temples and over the still rigid face; after which I poured out of my hunting flask a few drops of pure brandy between the parted lips, which seemed to have been overtaken in the very act of speaking.

What words might those have been, thus mysteriously and mysteriously sealed?

My heart leapt within me with anguish at the thought; for exhilarated, intoxicated with the happiness of that moment, I had just addressed words to her such as I had never spoken to her before: she had half-turned her beautiful head to reply, and the next moment had sunk her head in my arms.

CHAPTER IV.

My position would soon have become most embarrassing, were it that I had not yielded to the weakness which had surprised me, and it was then. After a heavy sigh, Miss Johnson opened her eyes, and a slight tinge of colour became perceptible in her cheek and lips. The crimson circlet was still trickling from the temple wound, which had scalped me; but I now perceived that it was a mere scratch, not deep enough to stop the stream of life, which was returning in full tide to the young and vigorous, although slenderly-shaped frame, which it seemed just before to have deserted for ever.

'Where am I?' was her first exclamation, as her hand wandered instinctively to her head, and her fingers became stained with the blood with which the blonde tresses were also partly saturated.

'Tell me where I am. Tell me what has happened. If you love me, do not trifle with me now.'

If I loved her! The answer almost had been touched at last, and touched by her own hand. The words, it is true, had been wrung from her lips by some strong, perhaps torturing passion that within, but they had been uttered, and in the selfishness of my own passion I believe that I could have blessed the accident which had thus removed the veil of maiden reticence, and let fly the tender secret which had been hidden in its folds like a bird in a tower's snare.

'You are alone with me; you are safe; you are surely better.' I was going on, but the words were hardly framed on my lips, when her head fell back upon my arm, and I saw that she had fainted again.

Used to the seclusion of solitude, had been during these anxious moments when she appeared to be quickly coming to herself, I was right glad, under the present aspect of affairs to hear in the distance the cheery notes of the huntsman's horn, and to see several strong-looking gentlemen who had been begged (I must even a word to express their peculiar and uncomfortable predicament) who needed but a sign of my part to avail themselves of the traces of an old waggon-track, to reach the spot where we had fallen upon so sudden grief, but where, now, I seemed to have realized the beautiful dream with the modesty of a rose, as when I had hardly dared suggest to my friends ways to come.

As the waggons approached, as I was glad to see that one of them had one of the gentlemen in the party, and that another gentleman showed me what the traces and behind some of the ladies, as women they had called upon to run, would put it out of the question that Miss Johnson would attempt to ride home, and that some other means must be found of conveying her to the cottage, which was at least six miles away on the other side of the moor.

Will Stockworth, the young Squire of Lowworthy, an excellent sportsman as well as a thorough sportsman of heart and muscle of steel, grew deadly white as he caught a



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CHAPTER IV.

My position would soon have become a most embarrassing one, if the faint had not yielded to the remedies which had suggested themselves to me. After a heavy sigh, Miss Johnson opened her eyes, and a slight tinge of colour became perceptible in her cheek and lips. The crimson rivulet was still trickling from the temple wound, which had so alarmed me; but I now perceived that it was a mere scratch, not deep enough to sap the stream of life, which was returning in full tide to the young and vigorous, although slenderly-shaped frame, which it seemed just before to have deserted for ever.

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'You are alone with me; you are safe; you are already better. I was going on, but the words were hardly framed on my lips, when her head fell back upon my arm, and I saw that she had fainted again.'

Sweet as the sensation of solitude had been during those delicious moments when she appeared to be quickly coming to herself, I was right glad, under the present aspect of affairs, to hear in the distance the cheery notes of the huntsman's horn, and to see several straggling horsemen who had been bogged (I must coin a word to express their peculiar and uncomfortable predicament), who needed but a signal on my part to avail themselves of the traces of an old waggon-track to reach the spot where we had fallen upon so much grief; but where, also, I seemed to have realized the happiness which, with the modesty of real passion, I had hardly dared before to hope would ever be mine.

As the horsemen approached us, I was glad to see that one of them held the fugitive Brittomart by the rein; although another glance showed me that the crushed and battered state of the saddle, on which she had rolled more than once in her frantic attempts to rise, would put it out of the question that Miss Johnson could attempt to ride home, and that some other means must be found of conveying her to the cottage, which was at least six miles away on the other side of the moor.

Will Beckworth, the young Squire of Elsworth, as gallant a sportsman as any in Devon, with nerves of iron and muscles of steel, grew deadly white as he caught a

glimpse of the face which lay in the stillness of death itself, upturned and rigid, upon my supporting arm.

'Good God!' he said, 'what is it? Has the mare rolled on her? Is she dead?' he added, in the tones of a desperate man, as he threw himself from the saddle, and laid his hand, actually trembling with some powerful emotion, upon the slender wrist. He was trying to detect a pulse; and there was a wild lurid expression in his eyes, which seemed to lighten with passion as he made a sort of gesture as though he would have set me aside. This action on his part I ignored with lofty politeness. I felt now that I had a right to do so. Had she not said to me, 'If you love me do not trifle with me now?' I could even afford 'to pity him. He was mad—infatuated—drunk, as it seemed to me, from strength of his passion. Poor devil! I said to myself; but aloud to him—

'Is there no cottage or farmhouse near where we could get a trap of some sort? You have your horse; will you go and see?'

'There is nothing nearer than my place, and that is a good three miles off; but I will go and fetch the dogcart, and bring Lucy back with me. My mother and sisters will take care of her till she comes round.'

Evidently glorying in the idea of the beautiful stranger a captive in 'his place' (hang his place! I involuntarily ejaculated) until she recovered from the effects of the accident, Will Beckwith mounted without further delay, and flashed like a Cossack across the moor.

The two other witnesses to the dilemma in which this untoward accident had placed myself and my companion were two sturdy North Devon farmers, who had trotted up on their stout cobs just as the young Squire of Elsworth rode off; and they both proceeded to administer words of counsel in an unknown tongue, which irritated me rather than otherwise, especially as a gentle sigh once more moved the lips on which all my future fate must now irrevocably hang.

'She be white, tu, she be, poor

lass; heave mun head up, measter, and give mun air,' remarked one sympathizing barbarian, to whose advice I did pay the homage of attention, and evidently with good results.

'She is better!' I joyfully exclaimed; 'she is coming round again. Have either of you seen my mare?'

'She be hoam at parson's now,' the most loquacious of the moorland farmers observed, for my edification; 'now'll stop she that road, or owt else she's a mind tu. She's like the women, she be,' and sounds as of the gurgling of fluid out of a long-necked bottle proclaimed that the wit was appreciated by the more taciturn of the two, who held the reins of Miss Johnson's mare. They had been thrown to him by Will Beckwith during his hasty dismounting from his own horse; and Brittomart was the first object upon which her mistress's eyes opened, as she came back to consciousness and to the recognition of surrounding objects.

'I am well now; let me go home,' she said, imploringly, while a vivid colour suffused her cheek, the blush of maidenly shame, entailed by the circumstances in which she found herself—fainting and helpless on that wild moor, a sight to be gazed upon with open-mouthed wonder by aborigines of barbarous manners and uncouth speech. I loved her even better thus than when the mocking and undaunted spirit sat at the windows of her eyes, and made havoc in the hearts of her slaves. All that was womanly, all that was maidenly in her rainbow-hued nature, spoke to my heart in that appealing cry, 'I am well now; let me go home.'

'You cannot ride,' I said, thinking, it must be owned, with despite of 'the place,' to which means of transit were even then perhaps on the road; 'your saddle is broken and the pommel crushed. Mr. Beckwith is gone for his dogcart; all we can do is to wait patiently until he returns.'

'Why did you allow it?' she added, in a deeply-injured tone; 'why did you let me be made a

sight of, Mr. Gwynne? Have you never seen any one swoon before? I have—and men too,’ she added, with a short laugh that had an hysterical ring in it. ‘I am not hurt; and, indeed, I must go home.’

She looked earnestly in my face—so earnestly, indeed, that I fancied some deeper meaning lay under her words than a mere wish to escape from the embarrassments of her present position. There was such determination, and such strength of will, in the firm but delicate curves of her mouth, that I knew she would have her own way, and was not surprised when she advanced a step or two in the direction of Brittomart, and said, a little haughtily to me as she did so, ‘Be so kind as to put me up.’

‘It is impossible; the girths are broken, and the pommel hopelessly crushed.’

‘But we can take the saddle off altogether; it is not the first time that I have ridden without one.’

‘Not now that you are faint and ill,’ I urged; ‘the fatigue would be very great.’

‘I can mend ‘girth,’ put in one of the farmers at this juncture, and with his stout ash stick held between his teeth, and at the risk of apoplexy to himself, he made the broken strap join issue with the corresponding buckle; after which difficult feat it became a comparatively easy one to draw it up to the last hole, while the indignant animal grunted an angry remonstrance to the proceedings of her self-appointed valet. His herculean task performed, he began to pull the saddle roughly to and fro, to test the safety of his own handiwork.

‘Her’ll do, if her don’t burst; I a braced mun tight,’ he observed to his companion during the operation; and Miss Johnson, whose keen sense of humour never entirely deserted her, said aside to me, ‘Poor Brittomart! hers is the danger, I think.’ The next minute she was in the saddle, such as it was, and making a little gracious obeisance to her rough, but ready friends, whose services had been ungrudgingly, although, perhaps, not very courteously bestowed.

‘Who will ride after Mr. Beck-with?’ I asked, venturing at the same time to lay a detaining hand on the mare’s bridle rein, for I felt that Miss Johnson was not in a fit state to ride alone, a proceeding which a slight but unmistakeable movement of hand and foot had warned me it was her intention to attempt. This quest having also been undertaken by the knights-errant whom a happy chance had thrown in the way of a distressed damsel, we were once more left in undisturbed possession of the wilds, which we were again about to traverse side by side, but this time at a foot’s pace. If the temper of the White Witch had sorely tried me at the beginning of the day, the following out of her ‘woman’s will’ in the latter instance had stood me in good stead. It was easier to say what I had to say, with an excuse for laying my hand upon the smooth arched neck of the mare, and in such close proximity to her lustrous, confidential eyes.

There is something to me very reassuring about the mute reliance of dumb creatures (as a certain class of philanthropists love to call the members of the brute creation), and Brittomart, notwithstanding her fiery temper, could, like most of her fair and versatile sex, be more than winning when she pleased. To see her glance consciously and confidentially at me for approval, as she avoided some obstacle in her path, and then give a coquettish toss with her head in the air, as though she would make light of the approbation she herself had courted, was a lesson in the ways of her kind.

There was silence between her rider and myself for a little space; all the coquettish arts of attraction, or subsequent depreciation, were indulged on the part of the animal only. Miss Johnson was apparently in a reverie, or the fatigue attending the exertion was too much for her, weakened as she must have been by the consequences of the accident. But silent and pre-occupied as she was, I fancied (whether magician or coxcomb I cannot tell), but I had a sort of

intuitive feeling that my presence at her side was not altogether unpleasant to her. Of one thing I am quite sure, that it was indescribably delightful and agreeable to me; and I hesitated to break a silence which seemed like a spell, by casting the die which would decide my own fate.

Woman-like, she did it for me. And here I would not have it thought that I am making an invidious, or even an ungracious suggestion, or using those most gracious and suggestive words as a sneer. Woman-like, I say, advisedly, in acknowledgment of a universally admitted fact, that women, having less to lose on the chances of the game, are cooler and more collected at a moment when a checkmate to her less accomplished adversary trembles in the balance against the divided honours of a drawn game. Go as it may, *she* cannot lose, and that is a consciousness which no man under such circumstances can boast (not, at least, if it be a game worth winning, and conducted according to the strict rules of chivalry and honourable strife).

There was nothing startling or electrifying in the simple words which, to my excited imagination, were as the notes of the clarion calling to arms, or as the first shimmering of the lances advancing in the lists. The voice in which they were uttered was musical and strangely thrilling, I thought; but in that there was nothing unusual, for it was always musical and thrilling to me, and the tremor which was quite perceptible in it at that moment was not likely to detract from its pathos in my ears.

'I cannot think of allowing you to accompany me farther. I must entreat you not to let me hamper you any longer; and as I have been the unfortunate cause of your losing your horse, pray oblige me by securing Mr. Beckwith's services to drive you home. I see him there,' she added, pointing to a distant spot with her riding-whip, whence the discomfited squire was no doubt anathematizing me for frustrating the plan which only the ingenuity of love could have coined

so readily in his somewhat obtuse brain; 'a signal will bring him to a stand in a moment.'

'I have no doubt of it,' I answered, perhaps with a suspicion of bitterness in my tone, 'but I have no intention of putting the experiment to the test;' and there was a choking sensation in my throat (for I loved her very much) as I added, 'You can hardly expect me to make a voluntary sacrifice of what it has been so long the object of my life to obtain—an opportunity of speaking to you alone. It might not have appeared fair or generous, perhaps, to take advantage of this unfortunate accident, but before the mare fell I had said something which—'

'Stop!' my companion exclaimed, and at the same time, with a sudden movement withdrawing the rein from my hand. 'I am no coquette: I do not pretend to misinterpret your meaning. I would have forewarned you, but there has been little opportunity. I am not what you think. The deepest misfortune that could befall me would be to win the affection of any honourable—or any honest man. And yet,' she added, as a storm of tears flowed which had evidently been surging like an unbroken wave for some time previously in her surcharged heart, '*I am not altogether unworthy of a friend.*'

As these words dropped slowly and painfully from her lips, every particle of colour forsook her cheek, while her eyes shone under her finely arched and delicately pencilled brows, giving her the appearance which one might imagine would belong to a statue into which a soul had been breathed, or of an inspired priestess or prophetess of old, looking fixedly into the things of futurity.

With a movement of her bridle hand she brought the mare suddenly to a stand; and then, with an action peculiar to herself, she clasped both hands firmly on the neck of the animal, and said slowly, and with the same fixed look—

'Do not sign my death-warrant; do not hint to me that I must sacrifice my last friend. It is one that I can barely afford.'

A bitter suspicion flashed across my mind. It was an old, old ruse with finished and accomplished coquettes. I had heard of it scores of times; I had myself been made the recipient of such a request more than once. Little Fanny Vavasour, who flirted with me all the season through, and who had such innocent doll's eyes, and such a ringing, child-like laugh, had entreated me with tears in her voice (as the French say) and with a little naïve pout of her under-lip, 'to let us always be friends, Mr. Gwynne,' when she gave me up, to marry Lord Deloraine, a roué of some sixty years' standing, who was, of course, the only man she could ever learn to love.

I hesitated before I replied. My faith was shaken, and consequently I stumbled and became awkward in my part.

'Why do you read me riddles?' I said, with all the impetuous arrogance of youth. 'It is scarcely worthy of you, Miss Johnson, to ask a man to stake his all upon a throw which can have but one issue, and yet this is what you mean when you hint at a friendship that can never go beyond.'

'I beg your pardon,' she said, coldly and haughtily, while the tender look died out of her face; and she was self-possessed and slightly contemptuous as she added, 'The friendship I spoke of might have had one advantage—it would have been very exclusive; it does not rain friends to me down here at Tower Moor.'

'Do not be hard upon me,' I said, repentant; 'it is my love that makes me selfish. I will accept your own terms, and only ask to be allowed to render you silent service, at your pleasure and for your own time. I will not count the cost beforehand; all I ask is, that you will not forestall a check-mate; let it come naturally, if it is to come, but let us be friends still.'

'Will you be satisfied if I admit that the cost shall not be all yours?' she asked, as she put her hand almost carelessly, I thought, on my shoulder, but withdrew it instantly. 'Perhaps my own game may prove

a losing one—I have played such a one before.'

Her voice had a sad ring in it, and it seemed to me that it was broken with deep-lying tears: it was not in man to resist such an appeal from such a source.

'I will do anything you wish,' I began, in a strain of youthful rhapsody; 'anything but leave you to the dreadful solitude of this place without knowing in what way I can serve you best. It is enough to kill any woman: it will kill you if you persist in it; and it cannot—must not be allowed.'

'These dreadful solitudes, as you call them, Mr. Gwynne, are pleasant enough to me. It is your own imagination that makes them seem so unendurable. I have been happy enough in these wilds.'

'But something has disturbed your happiness of late,' I asked, eagerly, and was about to proceed in a strain that I imagined might lead to the opening up of some confidence with regard to the mysterious relative on whose account she was willing to submit to a fate evidently little congenial to her natural temperament, when a horseman approached us at a sharp trot, and slightly touching his hat in acknowledgment of a lady's presence, asked to be directed the nearest way across the moor to Silverton. I directed him according to my own lights, which, however, were not very great; and I was not surprised to hear my companion remark drily—

'That is hardly to be called the nearest way which leads five miles out of the straight line.'

As I raised my eyes to her face, in the full expectation of meeting there with the mocking smile which was so often the herald of a quaint set down, I saw, to my amazement, that her lips were hard and set, and that her eyes were fixed steadily on the face of the stranger, whose ordinary appearance scarcely warranted the supposition that he could, in himself, have caused the interest which Miss Johnson so evidently bestowed on him.

'I must request the honour of the lady's direction, in that case,' the

stranger said, with a flippant air of ill-bred ease which made me long to kick him, but which she did not appear to resent, for she condescended to give a minute description of the nearest road to Silverton, and evidently took pains to make herself thoroughly understood.

'Thanks,' said the monster, consulting his watch with a business-like sort of air, as he uttered the impertinently familiar word; 'I shall be just in time for the Express up.'

Miss Johnson caught the words although they were said in a low tone. I could only just hear them standing between him and her, and she commented on them thus—

'Who knows what service I may not have done that man by enabling him to catch the Express up?'

The words were accompanied by a smile which it was painful to see; a forced, unnatural smile, such as I had never seen on her lips before.

'If he follows my advice,' she added, with a laugh that was little less painful to hear than the smile to see, 'I very much doubt if he will catch it. He is out-generated, and for the second time.'

She spoke rapidly and with hysterical fervour, and she seemed to have forgotten my presence. I was silent—silent from amazement at this new episode in the life of the strange but interesting being who exercised her weird fascinations over all who approached her. In what unaccountable way could she be so strangely affected by the appearance of one evidently of inferior position, and no breeding, whom she had thus condescended to make the subject of a practical joke.

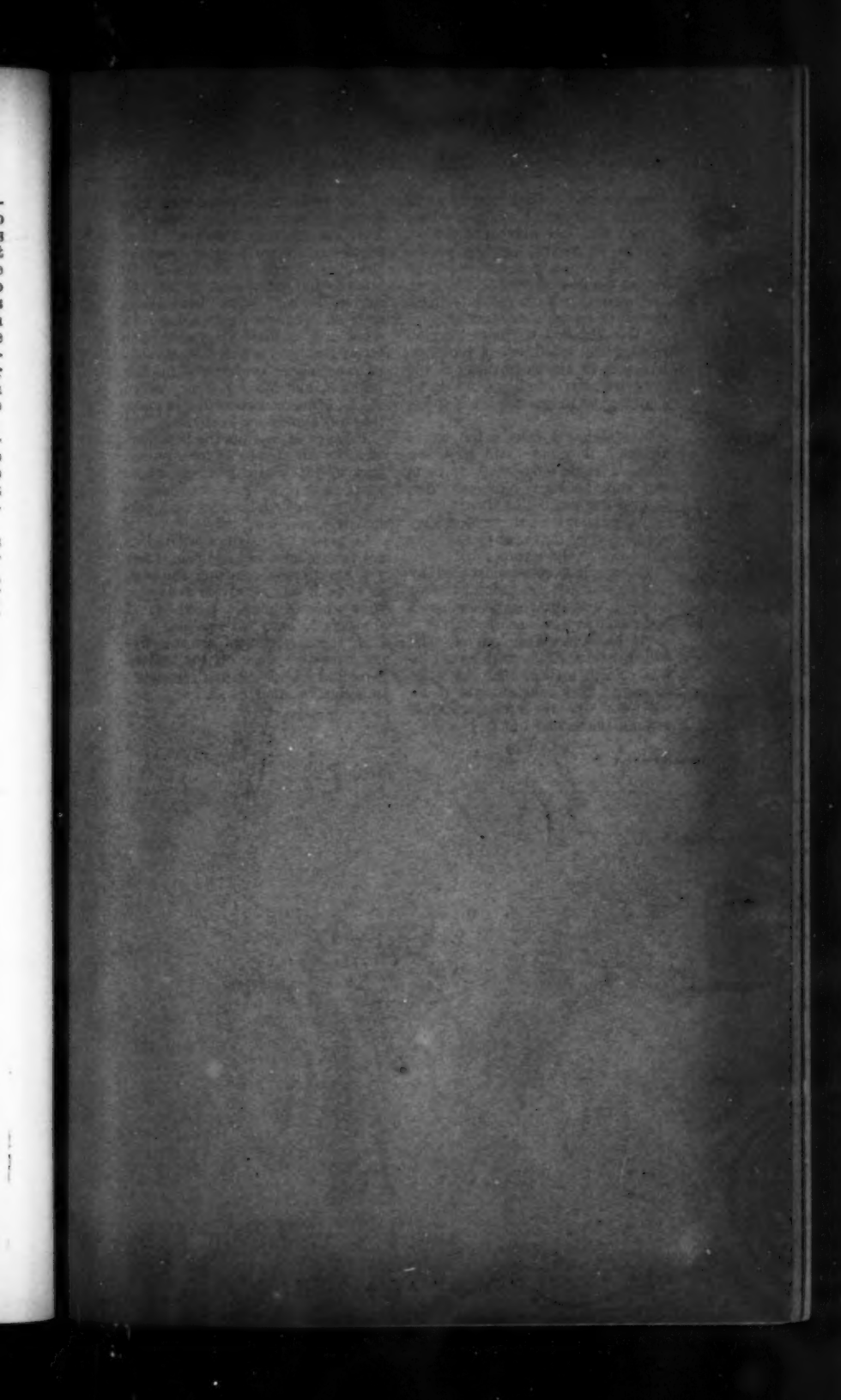
I was aroused from my bewilderment by an abrupt address on the part of my companion, on whose countenance I saw resentment plainly depicted, as she said, passionately and haughtily—

'Good-bye, Mr. Gwynne; it does not take much to startle you. I fear you are already counting the cost, and find it somewhat too heavy for your peace of mind. Good-bye; I am sorry to have lost a friend.'

In another moment she was flying over the moor on the gallant mare; and I was left in a somewhat ludicrous position, *alone*.

(To be continued.)







Drawn by Adelaide Claxton.]

'CHEAP AT A GUINEA.'

[See the Verandah.]

CHEAP AT A GUINEA!

CHEAP at a guinea? a rose and a pearl for it?
 In these a need to be found in the land
 Who would not give what you ask in a trice for it?
 Guinea?—why, love, it has lain in your hand!

Indeed, pity me! think of my condition!
 May I not beg, it is certainly fair,
 Just that wee wandering warble of agreement,
 All the day long we have sitting your lady!

Millions of tails I've washed, and my money
 Warfare commenced with a strong soldier;
 Finally I stood at my post, and was waiting
 Then, when I wanted, she brought my soldier!

Only just now little Fanny, a pet of mine—
 Fanny possessed the mouth I adore—
 Never so many his daughter I'd like to see—
 Said, 'If you'll purchase I'll have you no more!

Then, when I answered her, 'Tis not I love it all!
 Fanny replied in her innocent strain,
 'Well, if you're pendent, tell me and give it away;
 Give me a guinea! I'll have you again.'

Cheap at a guinea? No reason to talk on it;
 Roses for cushions you've fastened, I say;
 Troubles to lean on it prove it as well as the
 Then it were worth a I will do more of this.

Spent the day, I thought, and I thought I was a soldier;
 Endless, endless, endless, endless;
 Every spoon and fork was under the hand of the
 Pouch it no good, no good, no good, no good.

Ho, who is given to sitting and what you will;
 See, there she goes, in the room with the door;
 Travels in straw-saddles, riding on I like to know;
 When she's not being the lady to me now.

Look at this business, my dear, my dear, my dear;
 I have no time for it, that is the word;
 Why should I keep it for the French woman's use?
 Take it yourself—good? to be sure, it is.

Cheap at a guinea! they cry from the street-side;
 Prices and luck can but come to the end;
 Let them bent on with their drags the shadow of the
 Indeed! you are worth more than a guinea.



Drawn by Adelaide C. C. C.

THEATRE ALA GUINBA

Chas. J. Smith

CHEAP AT A GUINEA!

CHEAP at a guinea? a rose and a price for it?
 Is there a soul to be found in the land
 Who would not give what you ask in a trice for it?
 Guinea?—why, love, it has lain in your hand!

Isaline, pity me! think of my cranium!
 May I not beg, it is certainly fair,
 Just that wee wandering sprig of geranium,
 All the day long it's been kissing your hair?

Millicent's toils I've escaped, and it's lucky too,
 Warfare commenced with a volley of sighs;
 Firmly I stood at my post, and was plucky too;
 Then, when I wavered, she brought up her eyes!

Only just now little Fanny, a pet o' mine—
 Fanny possesses the mouth I adore—
 Never so saucy be daughter I'd let o' mine—
 Said, 'If you'll purchase I'll tease you no more.'

Then, when I answered her, 'Tease me! I love it so!'
 Fanny replied in her sauciest strain,
 'We'll, if you're penitent, tell me and prove it so;
 Give me a guinea! I'll tease you again!'

Cheap at a guinea? No reason to talk on it;
 Roses for cushions you've bartered, I see;
 Promise to lean on it, press it, or walk on it,
 Then it were worth all an income to me.

Scents they have brought me, and dresses and cradles too;
 Bachelors often are placed in a fix:
 Knives, spoons, and forks they have offered, and ladles too,
 Punch is no good lest the liquors *you* mix.

Flo, who is given to flirting and chaff, you know—
 See, there she goes, in the dress with the stars;
 Travels in strawberries, kissing one half, you know,
 When she's not biting the ends from cigars.

Look at this bassinette some one has won for me!
 I have no use for it, that is the worst;
 Why should I keep it till Hymen has done for me?
 Take it yourself—you'll be sacrificed first.

Cheap at a guinea! they cry from the thick of it,
 Prizes and luck can but come to the few;
 Let them tout on with their wares till they're sick of it;
 Isaline! you are worth more than I knew.

CLEMENT W. SCOTT.

EXMOOR.

THE best and speediest way for a tourist to reach Exmoor is to take the train to Tiverton, and go by way of Bampton and Dulverton through the Forest. As the 'Times' once said, 'Lord Palmerston has informed the world that there is such a place as Tiverton.' But most persons do not 'do' the northern shores of Devon and Somerset, simply on account of Exmoor, although Exmoor would exceedingly well repay a much longer visit than it generally receives, but connect it with their investigation of North Devon scenery, and that part of the Somerset scenery which is nearest to Devonshire, in point both of locality and beauty. I made Lynton my starting-place for the moor. Indeed, Lynton and Lynmouth belong in a sort of way to Exmoor. The great loveliness of these localities, the loveliness of water and foliage, where art has admirably handled nature so as to produce unrivalled effects, perhaps rather unfits the mind for the simple, severe, moorland charms of Exmoor. It is also to be allowed that Lynton has excellent hotels in which, of course, the forest is deficient, except to a humble extent at Simonsbath, or, it may be, one or two places elsewhere. The most beautiful scenery about Lynton is unquestionably that sub-alpine defile of Lyndale, and in the dense woods on its sides are the favourite haunts of the red deer of Exmoor. At Lynton and Lynmouth, you first visit the beautiful gardens so long associated with the name of Mr. Sandford and Lady Herries, but which now belong respectively to Sir Charles Smith and Mr. Riddell. I do not profess to discuss and balance the rival claims of Lynton and Lynmouth; the two combined justify Southey's saying that they are the finest spots he ever saw, next to Cintra and the Arrabida. Especially I have heard good judges say that the walk up the gorgo of the East Lynn, by the side of the stream, is the finest walk in England. It is especially beautiful at Watersmeet, where a second

river falls from ledge to ledge, and joins the East Lynn. In the sparkling streams, the haunt of trout and salmon, the tired hart from Exmoor loves to slake his thirst, and in the water that will betray no scent, or in leafy covert, or by mingling in a herd, he will try and evade his pursuers. On the other side of the ravine is a steep carriage-road, which ought to be traversed at least once in order to render the view of Lyndale complete. Here the astonished traveller has at times been met by a noble deer in full flight pursuing the open road until he will dash down the steep banks of the gorge to hide amid rocks and oaks, and presently the whole storm of chase sweeps by him in pursuit. The traveller who ascends this road, when he attains the heathery eminence of Scob Hill, will generally perceive the deer in the early morning or evening. He is now upon the moor, and the wild, bare country which stretches on every side around him will contrast most strongly with the wilderness of verdure and foliage that clothe the sides of the streams that meet the ocean at Lynmouth, and the coursing breezes will wonderfully brace and invigorate after the enervating effect of the Italian climate of that truly Campanian region.

As you pursue your way from Scob Hill, you will perceive, on your right hand, the hills among which are hid the fountains of the Exe and the Barle. The Barle is called a tributary of the Exe, but in Exmoor Forest the Barle is a noble stream, and the Exe is a thin rivulet draining from a desolate morass, over which you step with the utmost nonchalance, but is destined to extend into a mighty estuary, and give its name to villages and watering-places, and the fair capital of the west country. You are also close to the bogs, called Black Pits, and Mole's Chamber, the name of which last is derived from an unhappy farmer who, with his steed, perished in the bog, according to one story in the course of hunting, but accord-

ing to another, he left some friends, strongly against their remonstrances, to go homewards, although the mist was thick on the moor. It is said that his horse's hoofs were tracked to the edge of the bog, and his hat was found lying on the surface. These particular bogs are now both cultivated, but in local maps you will still see the position of 'dangerous bogs' laid down. You are now fairly upon the highlands, delighting the eye by the grandeur of their unbroken outline, and the rich beauty of their colour. Across the slopes of heather, interspersed with the dwarf juniper, cranberry, and whortleberry are the covers where the red deer make their lairs. You entirely miss the granite tors of Dartmoor; and, on the whole, you have to admit that Exmoor hardly approximates to the grandeur and wildness of Dartmoor. Still you have on Exmoor, as on Dartmoor, the true glories of moorland scenery—the immensity of sky and the immensity of a wild, unbroken expanse of land. The land stretches away on every side to the horizon like the round sea, and the sky overhead is as an unbroken dome. From most parts of the forest you see the blue waters of the sea; and the construction of the coast in alternate cliff and combs, now shapes itself into what is called the 'massive sea front of Exmoor.' Exmoor, as also Dartmoor, is girdled with a country of peculiar beauty and fertility. Those who prefer sylvan scenery to moorland scenery should remember that the rich and peculiar beauty of the scenery that skirts the moors is due, in great measure, to the protecting influence of the moorland ridges, the strength and purity of its air, the number and fertility of its streams. In the moorland air I especially delight, and, to quote Milton—

* Here I feel amended

The breath of heaven, fresh-blowing, pure and sweet.

Let the tourist of North Devon, who cannot be persuaded of the rare excellence of the moors, recal, nevertheless, how these have contributed to the woods and waterfalls which make musical the glens and ravines of the adjacent coast.

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And now that I am once more back in London, the impress of the beauty of those North Devonian shores is very strong upon me. It is not only the present gratification of the more delicate senses that is insured by the landscape and the sea-view, but the mind is stored with noble recollections, and their memorial sweetness is most satisfying. Here, in roaring Piccadilly, and going from the office to club, and squares, and libraries, moving, almost dazed, in the Opera Colonnade and up Regent Street, how suddenly and oddly comes the casual thought of the western Arcadia, as it has been called, but happier than the real Arcadia by its possession of a seaboard; a chance recollection, perhaps, evoked by some sketch or photograph in a printseller's window. I declare that long after I had left North Devon my brain was teeming with its recollections. I had only to close my eyes, and I had visions worthy of the Arabian Nights, if indeed the heated Arabian imagination could ever embody scenes of pure sylvan loveliness. I was roving through gardens like Armida's, or in woods, discerning the clear silver sea through the lacework of woven branches, or from an escarped rocky path looking down on the immensity of ocean, or watching some miniature fishing-village stranded on some shelving rocks just above its toy port, where the little children are watching the boats going out and coming in, especially the pleasure steamer that has brought its chance excursionists, and then I was scaling cliff upon cliff, or riding up hill after hill, or sinking into gorge and ravine; each different view opening up different scenes of kaleidoscopic variety; and then once more, in the light of the setting sun, gazing through

* Magic windows, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairy land forlorn.

Then, again, there were all the other pleasures, as sweet in the retrospect as the enjoyment; the gleeful thought that no letters could find us; the utter carelessness as to whether we saw the 'Times' or not; the rigid determination that no work or anxiety

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should mar the happy days which we were scoring up much faster than the unfortunate caliph who could only count eleven of them; the casual intimacies in which you discover more of the frankness and earnestness of a fellow traveller's nature than in seven years of formal London acquaintanceship. These are holiday delights; but in an ethical point of view it has to be noted that you must earn a holiday before you can thus enjoy it; and also that after a certain amount of enjoyment, the healthy feeling is that you feel an instinctive desire to get into harness once more.

Then, again, the tourist has his little mortifications. Only in the retrospect you remember the grotesque and amusing features much more than the mortifying features. It will perchance delight me to remember these things hereafter. It is disagreeable all events at the time, to know that the natives so generally conspire against the searcher for the picturesque and beautiful. At Clovelly, for instance, I was told that it was absolutely necessary to have a pair of horses to go from Clovelly to Bideford, on account of the Clovelly hill. The horses were duly ordered, and then I was requested to climb the hill in order that the horses might be saved. The toilsome climb achieved, the road was a remarkably even one all the way to Bideford. The North Devon visitor should be on his guard against this and similar impositions. If you are taking things leisurely—and leisure is absolutely necessary for your enjoyment—you had better take a basket-carriage, drawn by a stout Exmoor pony. The Exmoor pony will draw a considerable weight fifty miles in a day, over ground that would thoroughly knock up London carriage horses. Another advantage on the side of the Exmoor pony and the slight basket-carriage is, that you can travel on paths skirting the sea which are ordinarily confined to the pedestrian. This is far better than posting along the dusty high-road. I remember, among the things of the grotesque-mortifying kind, that strolling one day near that charming inlet of the sea that

runs up to Watermouth, I arrived at a sparkling brook, whence I intended to replenish my pocket-pistol. Fortunately, I inquired of a Devonian rustic whether the water of the stream was accounted good. 'It arn't very good,' he answered. The dancing rivulet seemed to contradict him, and I thought I might as well replenish my flask. 'There's better water a little further on,' urged the boy. Upon inquiring into the nature of his objection against the stream, the lad stated that *a dead donkey was lying in it a few yards higher up*. I mention this as a warning to excursionists that they must not drink confidently of every wayside brook. Another enjoyable disaster, at least in the retrospect, was a wet day on Exmoor. It was very pleasant and exhilarating when you first got on the moorland. The air of the sea-board, Lynmouth especially, is languid and heavy, but across the moor the wind blows with exhilarating violence, and the clouds and shadows track rapidly along. I do not know how the transition could have taken place so suddenly—but moorland weather is proverbially treacherous—but having gone in at Simonsbath to get some fodder for self and beast, when we came out the sky was completely overcast, and a dull, heavy, continuous rain had set in. Now I have a positive admiration for moorland mist and rain; the effects of mist and rain on the sea, or the sands, or moors, are to me the kind of sombre drapery that admirably befits such scenery. Wild Exmoor was wilder than ever in the scudding drift of rain and cloud; my æsthetic sense was satisfied, but my bodily senses were in extreme discomfort. The Exmoor pony, having sown the wild oats of its youth, had now subsided into a respectable and sober trot, apparently willing to trot on for ever, but decidedly declining to accelerate its degree of speed. To jump between blankets, to order a fire in the bedroom, to drink hot brandy and water, were the simple preservatives ultimately employed to mitigate the ill effects of the wetting, and with triumphant success.

Let me now methodically gather up some of the leading facts in relation to Exmoor. 'Its area is fourteen square miles—a waste of dark hills and valleys tracked by lonely streams!' If you come to the moor in the Porlock direction, you are in the neighbourhood of its highest part, Dunkery Beacon, which is supposed to command the finest prospect in the whole of the west of England. You see below you the bay, the channel, and the Welsh mountains with their eminent effects of colour. The moor is outspread before you, its black hills, its wandering streams, ferny glens and heights, morasses, and browsing common grass, and the girdle of beauty that encompasses the moorland—the slopes and undulations of cornland and woodland—black moors stretching in advance for miles, and occasionally, perhaps, varied by one of those grand cloud effects, when mists come whirling over the hills in wreaths, and here and there open to show patches of green as brilliant as 'chrysophrase.' There is a jolly little inn at Porlock, abounding with antlers of red deer, pleasant reminiscences of the forest, and in the visitors' book you may read the imposing entry 'Westbury, Lord High Chancellor of England:' the majority of illustrious strangers, however, content themselves with a simpler announcement of their dignities. The capital of Exmoor is Simonsbath, where its monarch, Mr. Knight, has a seat, and was in residence at the time of our visit. He intended to have built a palace here, but this scheme, like various others, came to nothing, and has chiefly served to furnish a romantic solitude with the crumbling walls and towers of a picturesque ruin. It was in 1815 that the late Mr. Knight purchased from government—I believe for 80,000*l.*—a tract of twenty thousand acres, being the ancient forest of Exmoor. He was much less fortunate in his venture than Mr. Augustus Smith in his purchase for three lives of the Scilly Islands, which yield him a very large percentage on his outlay. Mr. Knight encircled the forest with a ring fence, laid out roads, and made

gates, built a church, and began building a castle, but 'was not able to finish.' His original design was to convert the forest into water-meadows, and, however much we may regret the failure of his personal adventure, yet in the interest of the picturesque we cannot regret that he has failed in disafforesting Exmoor. Probably about a quarter of the whole tract has been brought into the condition of cultivated farms; but chilly mists, strong winds, and a soil somewhat hard and ungrateful, are not conditions favourable to success. Among the golden hopes of the Great Exhibition was the expectation that an El Dorado had been discovered on Exmoor. Mr. Robert Smith, the agent to Mr. Knight, had discovered and exhibited white carbonate of iron, and further searches proved the existence of abundant iron lodes, including ores which hitherto had been supposed to be peculiar to certain districts in England and Wales. It was supposed that the aspect of the forest would be entirely changed, and that all pastoral pursuits would be entirely given up in favour of mining. Three of the principal iron companies in the kingdom took part in the undertaking, and a mineral railway was actually laid down to Porlock. The scheme, however, was unsuccessful; it has not been thought worth while to carry it out. The forest obstinately refuses to be utilized. The visitor need not fear the unshapely confusion of mining operations. The forest is still partially agricultural, but mainly devoted to the use of the wild deer and the wild ponies. This last breed of the native English horse has been carefully preserved by Sir Thomas Acland. There is an annual sale of them at Bristol, and you may obtain at a very low rate animals possessing a very large amount of spirit and endurance.

Simonsbath itself is a very noticeable kind of place. It almost looks like a settlement or clearing in the midst of a vast prairie; but has a group of fine old trees like an oasis in the desert. One Simon, an outlaw, perhaps to be

identified with the King Sigismund so well known to the Anglo-Saxons, is said to have had a stronghold here, and the bath is a crystal pool in which he used to plunge, and in which the tired hunter or pedestrian would do well to plunge also. There is good trout-fishing in the Barle, and you will be glad to catch some; little beyond eggs and bacon is to be obtained at Simonsbath or Withypool. At Simonsbath take the right-hand side of the river, and follow its course down to the latter place. It flows on, calm, shallow, and broad, through a lovely solitude which at times must give perfect rest to the mind, and brings you to Withypool, 'a place,' says Mrs. Chanter in 'Ferry Combes,' 'that looks as if it had fallen by accident into its present position, and as if the houses had never recovered their fright. They are dotted about, without the faintest semblance of regularity, each with a large turf-stack, and a swarm of children and geese, while in every direction shaggy ponies and still more shaggy colts are to be seen.' Still following the river you will find that one side of it is wild and bare, and the other richly wooded, and so you come to a weird bridge, which some attribute to the early British, and others make a Devil's Bridge of it, where a dozen slabs rise like piers and support the stones which make the bridge. There are some pretty towns on the outskirts of the moor, where one might pleasantly sojourn for a time. Such are Exford, Winsford, Dunster. Simonsbath, however, is the genuine Exmoor town. There is another town, however, which deserves especial mention. Under the heights of Exmoor is the little town of Dulverton, in an amphitheatre of hills whose wooded sides are a frequent covert for the red deer. Dulverton is, or rather was, the residence of Mr. Collyns the surgeon, whose 'Notes on the Chase of the Wild Red Deer' is a very interesting and well-written monograph on the locality. Mr. Collyns deserves mention, if only from the fact that when the wild deer ceased to be hunted for some years, he

collected several couple of staghounds and organized a committee of management. From the time of Queen Elizabeth till within a century ago, the royal ranger of the forest kept a pack of staghounds, in Elizabeth's time, at Linmouthwater; but after the forest was leased into private hands the hunt became a matter of much uncertainty. Mr. Collyns's book is very much superior to Mr. H. B. Hall's work on 'Exmoor; or, the Footsteps of St. Hubert in the West.' Mr. Hall says of his entrance to Dulverton: 'On our left a high and steep declivity, covered with hard coppice, sheltered the roadway, while on our right, within half a stone's throw a glittering trout-stream rushes onward, rippling and clear, over many moss-covered rocks and pebbles; the whole scene, as we entered the little market-town, reminded us forcibly of many a similar retreat in Switzerland, though we doubt much if the Pays de Vaud could produce anything half so luxuriant in herbage or meadow-land.' Dulverton may be said to be the head-quarters of the Exmoor hunt.

I speak as an outsider, but I certainly think that the pursuit of the stalled stag, carted to the scene of action, must be very inferior to that of the Exmoor stag on its native heath, even though her Majesty's staghounds were concerned and old Davis were cheering on the pack. From what I hear, you best hunt the Exmoor stag on the Exmoor pony. He is famous for speed and endurance, and knows best how to manage the Exmoor bog or morass. There are legends of horse and rider being buried in the bog, but I have not found any modern and well-authenticated instances. Mention has already been made of Mole's Chamber. In the bracing autumn hunt the deer will go twenty or thirty, forty or fifty miles, and is generally finished off in the water, either in stream or at sea, and then the noblemen and gentlemen who may be having their first hunt have ear or face smeared with blood in token of initiation. The hunted deer will sometimes reach the edge of a cliff, and dares a perilous leap,

which would be certain death to horse and rider, and which has killed many a good hound. Sometimes when the deer has taken to the open sea a very peculiar kind of chase succeeds. The hunters want a boat, but perhaps it is an hour or two before a boat can be procured. In the meantime some hateful ship is seen in the offing, perchance some Bristol-bound collier, and they, discerning the state of things, send off a boat after the treasure trove of good venison. These 'pirates,' as they are called, have been repeatedly known to carry off the booty at the close of a very hard day's run. To keep up the hounds has been a very constant cause of anxiety and expense, especially since there is always a most wonderful difference between the subscription list on paper and the subscription list in reality. The hunt has given occasion for that most sumptuous and unvarying hospitality for which the western country is justly famous, and in many a country house around the head and branching horns of antlered deer recall the memory of famous runs recorded on the rolls of Exmoor achievements. From what I have been able to learn the hunt on Exmoor must be totally different from hunting anywhere else. All sportsmen give credit to the proprietor of Exmoor for being a noble preserver of many a fine head. (Their chief resort, it should be said, are the woods round the isolated grange of Brendon.) They all agree that hunting here is about the hardest hunting known. The accidents that happen are numerous and continual, and clearly indicate the danger of the sport. There are two seasons for hunting, respectively, one month in the spring for hinds, and an autumn season for stags, which begins on the twelfth of August and often lasts till Christmas. I have just been looking at an account of a hunt on Exmoor. It lasted for seven hours; many men had fifty miles to go home, and two horses died in the chase.

I will mention two curious and altogether unintelligible publica-

tions which are not unknown to those who love the oddities of literature. These are (1) 'An Exmoor Courtship; or, a Suitoring Discourse in the Devonshire Dialect and Mode near the Forest of Exmoor,' and (2) 'An Exmoor Scolding in the Propriety and Decency of Exmoor language between Two Sisters, Wilmot Moreman and Thomasin Moreman as they were spinning.' The last of them was published in an early volume of the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' They have passed through numerous editions, and have been enriched with a highly curious glossary. The version which they give of the propriety of Exmoor manners is not at all favourable to the aboriginals. The complaint against Devonshire manners generally, and the manners of the moors in particular, is an old one. Herriek, the Devonshire poet, speaks of 'the dull confines of the drooping west,' and complains of the 'wasting incivility' of his own village. He writes—

'Rocky thou art, and rocky we discover
Thy men, and rocky are thy ways all over.'

Old Fuller, who generally takes a very kindly view of things, says some very severe things concerning the natives of the Devonshire moors. It must be owned that at one time Exmoor fully deserved a very evil repute. At one time a daring gang of robbers known as the Doones of Badgeworthy infested the moor and its borders. In consequence of a peculiarly atrocious murder, the whole country side was aroused against them, and the Doones were captured and put to death. Since that time Exmoor has lost its evil pre-eminence. Still the men of the Devonshire moors are noted for their sturdy independence, and can be brusque and warlike if they think the occasion so demands. This apparent roughness often hides a peculiarly kindly disposition; honesty and hospitality are distinguishing virtues, and even local roughnesses are fast disappearing amid ameliorating influences. Devonshire deserves the title which old Fuller bestows on Suffolk, of being 'a sweet and civil-spoken county.'

ANOTHER WORD ABOUT SWITZERLAND.*

THOSE who, not content with scanning distant panoramas, wish to find themselves face to face with giant mountains, and obtain admission to the actual presence, should lose no time in reaching Unterseen or Interlaken, for the two are one, separated only by a bridge over the river Aar. We have called them the centre of all things Swiss, as they are the favourite rendezvous for all except Italian tourists, who find Lucerne and Coire more conveniently situated.

Unterseen is a mere village; dull, dingy, and thrust out of sight behind the corner of a rock. In its outskirts, just before reaching it from the Lake of Thun, is an excellent and reasonable hotel—the 'Pension Beausite,' much and deservedly patronised by English visitors—whose obliging landlord, M. Rüchti, like most of his colleagues, is an accomplished linguist. The long winter evenings—when the whole establishment is closed, and the family have retreated to count up their gains, and hibernate in the snuggest corner of the solitary building,—afford such capital opportunities for study! People, here, learn languages during the short days, and practise speaking them during the long ones.

In the village is an inn, the Hôtel de Ville, or Kaufhaus, mainly resorted to by French and German artists, and a few English of frugal minds. It is a vast, rambling series of suites of apartments, in which you are not badly off either for bed or board; only at some points of the corridors there are pungent smells which revive the memories of Italian inns. There is no view, except on the melancholy Place and on the face of the rock which rises like a prison wall. In short, the interior aspect of Unterseen is not cheerful; but if you only halt there for rest and refreshment, to study your guide-books, bring up your notes, and write your letters, what

does it matter? A rainy day there much resembles a rainy day in any other secluded hamlet. The philosopher employs that occasion to improve his mind, renew his stock of strength, get his linen washed, and heal his foot-sores. The compulsory rest of a rainy day has saved many a tourist from knocking up utterly.

There is one thing, however, you may do to beguile the time. You may see at blacksmiths' shops the announcement, 'Ici on marque des batons,'—'Sticks and staves branded here.' This is not the only place where the operation is performed; far from it; practitioners are provokingly plentiful. But, to quote a favourite French public-house sign-board, 'Autant ici qu'ailleurs,'—'Just as well here as anywhere else.' So you take your cumbersome alpenstock, or your faithful walking-stick under your arm, and get it marked with the names of places it has visited, or which it wishes to pass for having visited. As the blacksmith heats his brand and takes his fee without requiring any certificate, nothing but your innate modesty prevents the addition of the Matterhorn to Mont Blanc, the Jungfrau, Monte Rosa, and other enviable summits inscribed on your list. For money, perhaps he would consent to mark that your alpenstock had ascended a mountain in the moon. The names thus entered are sometimes so numerous that you meet alpenstocks which are perfect walking gazetteers. They remind you of Robinson Crusoe's post, on which he notched the days of his solitude. But the alpenstock has become quite a plaything, a piece of dandyism to dangle in the hand 'as a gentleman switches his cane.' Even young ladies and little girls carry their second-sized alpenstock, to show that they have ascended eminences some fifty feet above the plain. Richly-lettered alpenstocks are highly valued; yet, such is the uncertainty of worldly prosperity, that I have seen them reduced to serve as broom-handles, after surmounting the peak

* Continued from p. 20 of our Number for July.

and scaling the precipice. It is as touching a fall as that of Great Caesar turned to clay, stopping a hole on a winter's day.

Interlaken contrasts favourably with Unterseen. It is not a village, but an avenue of villas, hotels, and booths, arranged like a scene of an opera ballet, the effect of which is heightened by magnificent walnut-trees, overshadowing the road like the wings and flies of a theatre, and by the background of mountains inclosing the whole. There are shops displaying embroidered muslins, wood-carvings, skins of wild animals, and other articles equally ornamental, picturesque, and useless. To the right are enclosures of park-like turf, kept short by frequent mowings for the sake of the hay—and Swiss women handle the scythe quite as well as the men can do. Nor do they do their work by halves. After mowing it, they make their hay by tossing it high into the air, with a very broad and many-tined fork. Some gardens, to satisfy impatient botanists, allow wild flowers, as single pinks, and even bulrushes, to luxuriate as if in their native wilds.

Beneath those stately walnut-trees, brown-coated guides, often with round backs and pasty faces, are lounging, ready to start for any point of the compass, or conduct you to the top of any known pinnacle. To secure a lodging in these hotels during the height of the season, it is prudent to announce your approach by telegraph. The trifling expense will sometimes save your having to choose whether you will sleep under the sky or under the dining-table. Amongst them, you may certainly get good treatment without overcharges of which to complain. I was well satisfied with the *Hôtel du Lac*, at the extremity of the avenue, near the Lake of Brienz.

Although there sometimes comes a whiff of cold weather, scattering snow during the night over the lower hill-tops, and making a fire acceptable even in an August evening, as a rule, the summer climate of Interlaken is close and oppressive. You are conscious, there, that

the air is a fluid; you admit the fact of the atmosphere's weight; you feel the pressure of the upper strata condensing the lower one to the condition of an orchid-house, which is shut up tight and saturated with vapour. Few people can bear this heavy atmosphere long. It is just the climate to make flies sting; otherwise it suits the vegetable better than the animal economy, especially that highest economy, the organism of the human frame. Consequently, Interlaken is quite as much a centre of repulsion (let us say of radiation) as of attraction. The place is too pretty, the creature-comforts too numerous, the crowd of strangers too amusing, to make it possible for you not to like it at first sight; but the air is too thick, the spot too confined, not to make you long to get away from its relaxing influences. You revolt against the spell of a Castle of Indolence, where you might end by lying in bed and dozing all day long.

An inevitable excursion, requiring little effort whether you do it on foot or in a carriage, is to visit the Staubbach, the wonderful Dust-Burst, one of the brightest pictures in the Childe Harold gallery. In the former case, you want no guide; you have only to follow the road and the stream of travellers. With walls on each side of you, some thousand feet high, it is not very easy to miss your way. In the latter case, the landlord of your inn will recommend you to the vehicle you require at the established tariff.

Assuredly, it is a thing to do, somehow; although it is the grandeur of the valley of Lauterbrunnen, quite as much as the waterfall, which makes the trip so well worth taking. No painting or print ever yet given to the world (and they are countless) conveys the full majesty of that valley. There shall you hear frequent echoes of marvellous repetitional powers; there shall you gather the pretty *Parnassia*, the chastest marsh-flower of the lowland plain; there shall you find enormous edible snails, which the natives would never dream of eating, not even were you to set them the example; until at last you

reach the cascade, and gaze at the spectacle of a stream first breaking its neck, and then divided into atoms and reduced to powder in the air.

The Staubbach is the one mentioned by tourists; but in reality there are several staubbachs, or dust-brooks, on either side of the valley, which, there, is what we should call a deep ravine. The quantity of water in these staubbachs appears to depend, somewhat paradoxically, upon the heat rather than upon the rain. The sun shines, the snows melt, and there is a constant music of rushing streams.

Don't go back to Interlaken by the way you came, but scramble over the Wengern Alp, after eating or sleeping at the Pension Staubbach, or Staubbach Hotel (unpretending, good, and cheap), or at the older establishment, the Steinbock. The latter had once the monopoly, and did itself (and short-pursed travellers) infinite harm by its scale of charges. Perhaps it has learnt a lesson from the uprising of its young wood-built rival [wood, unpainted, is used here, both in the exteriors and interiors of buildings, as much from fashion as economy]; perhaps it has not; it being difficult to teach old dogs new tricks. Horses are to be had to make the passage; but they are hard-worked, sorely-tried beasts; and if you can do it on foot, it is better to do so. As you mount, you get glorious views down into the valley. On foot, you are your own master; you can turn round, sit down, and enjoy them at leisure; whereas on horseback it is inconvenient to look behind you, unless you ride in an ignominious position, facing the tail; and the hirer of the steed prefers to regulate its halts according to *its* wants rather than your good pleasure.

From the heights you trace the course of the numerous little staubbachs—the 'clear springs' from which Lauterbrunnen derives its name—until they fling themselves over the edge of the cliff; and it occurs to you that the Staubbach might be artificially improved, by turning into it other brooks to increase its volume.

Waterfalls are often the better for receiving a finishing touch from the hand of man; witness the Giessbach, a charming excursion to be taken from Interlaken, which I therefore dispose of here at once. You may either do it by daylight, between breakfast and dinner, sleeping both nights in your accustomed bed; or, you may sleep at the Giessbach Hotel, to witness the evening illumination of the falls by Bengal fires. In the former case, you can lunch at a restaurant on the terrace, which commands a view of the waterfalls (seven in all, besides minor leaps and rapids which do not count), and the magnificent forest in which they are enshrined.

A steamer on the Lake of Brienz takes you in about an hour from Interlaken to the foot of the falls, which are said to have been 'discovered' by a schoolmaster named Kehrlí—much as Columbus discovered the moon. The Swiss Dominie's grand and real discovery was, that he could make money by them. On your way note the curious greenish rocks, on the south side of the lake, towards the head, facing the north. You land close to the spot where the cascade makes its final plunge, and are forthwith accosted by worthies offering bouquets of rare Alpine flowers for sale. If you buy them for your herbal merely, all is fair and straightforward; there is nothing to be said: but to stick *bought* flowers in your hat (after the country fashion) as a trophy, giving the world to understand that you have gathered them, is a sham worthy of denouncement in Carlylian language. And here you have only to mount high enough to beplume yourself with such sprigs of heath and gentian as shall show you have really found a prize *in situ* instead of picking it out of a hawk's basket.

It requires not a very close inspection to discover that the course of the brook has been turned in places. As the whole is, not a waterfall but a continued succession of waterfalls, it is easy to understand that some of them may have been the better for a little alteration. That, for instance, where you

go between the cascade and the rock and gaze at outward objects through a veil of falling water, is charming, and perhaps unique; for though you can get behind Niagara, you cannot see through it. If this 'effect' did not exist naturally, honour to the artist who contrived it.

Another very curious fact can hardly escape your observation. Most streams, the further they go the greater is their magnitude. Compare, for example, the Thames at Windsor with the Thames at Lambeth, or the Rhine at Bâle with the Rhine at Cologne. In the Giesbach, on the contrary, there is more water in the upper falls than in those below, in consequence, evidently, of the considerable waste by evaporation, dispersion of the spray by winds, and absorption by vegetation in the course of the long descent (eleven or twelve hundred feet). It becomes fine by degrees and beautifully less; had it much further to fall, it might end in nothing. That result does actually occur in a few other lofty cascades; most notably so, perhaps, in the principal fall in the Cirque de Gavarnie (High Pyrenees), where sometimes, in hot summers, of the water shot over the precipice, with a stratum of dry air some fourteen hundred feet deep to traverse, scarcely a drop reaches the bottom. Earth is cheated of its accustomed dew; the thirsty atmosphere takes it all to itself.

On fine summer days the Wengern Alp is crowded, as far as it is possible to crowd so vast a scene, in which man is an animalcule sometimes visible, sometimes requiring a magnifier to make him out. If you could stick up a gate at each end of the passage, and lock it, you would catch between them, on such sunny occasions, a considerable number of English fashionables and fineries. Nor is the trip the less pleasant for that. Handel's oratorios sound none the worse for being listened to by thousands of auditors, nor has the splendour of the Paris Exhibition been diminished by the gaze of millions of visitors. A benevolent Creator, happily for us, has made many blessed things

which are absolutely inexhaustible; the pleasure derived from them by each individual in no way lessens the amount of pleasure derivable from them by the rest of his fellow-creatures. I get all the warmth and light I want from the sun (sometimes more than I want), and there is still plenty of warmth and light left for you. After I, and my children, and my great-great-grandchildren, with a posterity as numerous as Brigham Young's are expected and prophesied to be—after *we* have received from the sight of Lauterbrunnen and its belongings all the delight our poor souls are capable of receiving, *your* posterity will be none the poorer in respect to the delight to be received from it.

Lady tourists especially enjoy the Wengern Alp. A very few have the courage to do it on foot, although it is a stiff trot for untrained walkers; others are carried in chairs by men who relieve each other at intervals. This is of course an expensive mode of travelling; and when the bearers get heated with their toil, you scent other odours besides mountain thyme. The majority traverse the Alp as amazons, but when they have mastered the first steep ascent, they often dismount from their spavined steeds, receive their alpenstock from the hand of the guide, and so stretch their pretty little legs and exercise their pretty little feet. They make bouquets of cloudberry and cranberry, and stick flowers into the hatbands of sober-minded men who never before thought of wearing such things.

It being optional whether you make the passage from Lauterbrunnen to Grindelwald or *vice versa* from Grindelwald to Lauterbrunnen, you meet quite as many comers as you pass or are passed by goers. In going either way on horseback it is wise to make the final steep descent on foot. With such a stream of strangers thronging to and fro, you want no guide, unless to carry your toothbrush and your bit of soap: and, strange to say, on the Wengern Alp, unintroducted persons, even English subjects, salute each other, nay, interchange civil

and sympathetic words, under the softening influence of the genius of the spot. 'Fine day!' 'How very lovely!' 'Capital lunch to be had up there!' escape from lips that never addressed each other before and often never address each other again.

'Up there' (once the Châlet of the Wengern Alp, but now grown into the Hôtel de la Jungfrau) is on the level bit, the turning-point between ascending and descending, where you are close (using the word as a relative term) to the upper ice-clad pyramid of the Jungfrau, with its horn of silver (Silberhorn) and its horn of snow (Schneehorn), and where you may see and hear, free from danger, the fall of avalanches at inconsiderable intervals of time. The sight looks like a snow-slip from a house-roof, no bigger; the sound reveals the magnitude of the mass, while the seconds that elapse between the slip and the thunder mark the distance between the eye and the actual event. If people were not so hurried and time-pressed, it would be worth sleeping a night or two 'up there,' to stroll all day (not alone, but kept out of harm's way by some native who knows the place) fancying yourself Manfred, only a little less miserable, gathering strange plants and smoking your cigar where the fragments of the mountain are piled in heaps and the world of verdure is contiguous with the world of snow.

The best time for avalanches is the afternoon, when the sun has softened the surface of the snow. One little lump let loose from the heights will draw after it considerable masses, which rush together down hundreds of feet. Still, these summer avalanches are very different in magnitude to the enormous ones that fall in spring. The traveller who has formed his own previous conception of the phenomenon is likely to be disappointed at first by what looks, at that distance, like the scattering of a handful of flour. The sound alone, the thunder-like murmur, convinces him that the long cascade of dust must weigh many hundred tons, and would sweep houses before it, if they stood

in its way. On reaching the bottom, these snowfalls melt and swell the torrent of the Lütchine, which sweeps down the valley of Lauterbrunnen. It is only by looking at the Jungfrau from a comparatively near point of view like this—and even here, the highest summit, placed further to the south, is invisible—that an idea can be conceived of the difficulty of accomplishing its ascent. 'Is it possible,' you exclaim in wonder, 'that a human foot can ever have been planted there!' The foolish and unprofitable feat was first performed, in 1811, by Messieurs Rod and Meyer, since when it has been repeated by other foolhardy folk, a lady even having, in 1863, for want of something better to do, thereby manifested her lack of common sense.

The Wengern Alp boasts a second inn, the Bellevue, a short hour's walk from the Jungfrau Hôtel, at a spot called the little Scheideck, or Wengern-Scheideck, where good entertainment may also be had. Thence commences the descent down to Grindelwald, during which various groups of mendicants—wakers-up of echoes, ballad-singers, and road-menders—remind you, like *Candide's* gallows—that the country you have arrived at is civilized.

If not in a hurry, Grindelwald is worth stopping at a few hours or for the night, if only for the occasion it allows to ladies and others of setting foot on a glacier, for once, without fatigue. The staple manufacture of Grindelwald is guides, who abound, and are well reputed. Many of them, however, make a good thing by the unromantic employment of carrying ladies and gentlemen to and fro in chairs. There are two principal hotels at Grindelwald, the Eagle and the Bear. When I stopped at Grindelwald—I have passed through it since without stopping—everybody went to the Eagle, avoiding the Bear as if it had the pestilence; why, I know not. The Eagle is good, but the charges sufficiently high, as is said to be general throughout the village. From it

to the upper glacier the distance is trifling; but, when you propose to walk there with ladies, the guides tell you truly the way is too dirty. The paths are gutters running with mud and slush; so your female friends have to make their choice between a horse and a two-porter chair—expense much about the same—to the evident benefit of the natives. If Grindelwald had a decent path leading to the glacier, it would lose a considerable part of its revenue.

The morning is the best time to go on the glacier, before the sun has made it slippery; but a few steps ought to suffice to gratify your curiosity. At the foot of the glacier is a singular ice-cave with a soft blue light breaking through its substance. The permanence of this cave is partly explained by the bits of glacier served to you at dinner. From Grindelwald you descend, by an excellent road, past wooden houses rejoicing in abundant inscriptions and luxurious carving, meeting pale-faced men and boys clad in russet brown to match their complexions, and women and children drawing carts in a melancholy way like beasts of burden. You yield to their importunity and buy a few toy chalets, and gain once more the vale of clear springs.

An ascent to be made (while Interlaken is still your head-quarters) which contrasts strongly with that of the Wengern Alp in every respect except that it *is* an ascent, and which the tourist is strongly advised to carry out, is that of the Niesen. From a complicity of causes, all very natural, the Niesen is a favourite hill with all who live within sight of it, and is regarded with neighbourly affection, as a symbol of good fellowship, much as the Wrekin is in Shropshire;—only its altitude (some eight thousand feet above the sea) reduces the Wrekin to humble proportions. As an unmistakable proof of its popularity, Niesen is a favourite name to give to railway locomotives, steamers, and dogs. It is a quiet mountain, comparatively isolated (thereby commanding an extensive prospect), and so little dangerous

that you may allow ladies to climb it, on horseback, without feeling qualms of conscience.

On the Niesen, you are not tormented (as you are on more frequented slopes) with mendicity, direct and indirect. No questionably blind women sing doleful ditties, to advertise their retail trade in lace. No horns nor pop-guns, for the showing-off of echoes, summon you on the road to stand and deliver. No urchins, to whom you refuse tribute, stir up wasps' nests and then run away. In short, you can safely mount the Niesen without loading each pocket with five francs-worth of sou's.

At Neuchâtel even, you may catch a glimpse of its summit, if you know it when you see it, and where to look for it. On the Lake of Thun, you behold it close at hand, and can measure it there from top to toe. But the best view of all, as a picturesque object, is obtained from the cemetery of Thun, where its dark-green pyramid, clothed at the base with a rich mantle of coniferous verdure, forms the centre of a most striking group.

To the right, the grey time-worn stump of the Stockhorn is peeping over a wreath of fleecy clouds. Between Niesen and Stockhorn is a lower ridge hung with a tapestry of fir-tree woods, which, at that distance, look like the moss growing on a shady bank. To the left of Niesen, in the background and filling up the interval between it and the shadowy Drei Spitz, uprises the solid snow-covered wave of the broad Blumlis Alp.

All this is only the outer framework of the landscape seen from the cemetery of Thun. The central area of the picture in which the Niesen figures is filled up by the Lake of Thun; by the river Aar rushing out of it, in its way to Berne and Fribourg; by an outspread plain patched with cornfields and meadows, dotted with trees and human habitations, and richly fringed with upright poplars. To add more variety where variety is superabundant, there is the bowery island of the Aar, the covered bridge which serves as a sluice-gate, the

steamer ready to start for Unterseen, and the pretty town of Thun itself.

To get to the Niesen from Interlaken, the simplest way is to retrace your steps and cross the Lake of Thun to the little port of Spiez, where the steamer will deposit you. This lake is partly fed by the river Simme, which also brings to it something more solid and permanent than water. It has already carried out a very large delta of soil and pebbles into the lake, and must eventually fill it up. A few hundred years hence, the Lake of Thun will not be half so pretty as it now is, which is a reason for enjoying it while we can.

From Spiez to Wimmis is only a stroll: at first, through bowers of luxuriant plum-trees; thence, you may take a short cut through a wood; then over a bridge that spans the Kander and along the high road, until you reach the Löwe or Lion, with a pension opposite belonging to the same landlord, for boarders, strangers, and quiet people in general. For inns like this, in Switzerland, often answer the purpose of Town Hall, Exchange, and Common Council room combined, where the natives meet at stated times to discuss commercial affairs and local politics.

Wimmis, pretty and picturesque, is the portal of the Simmenthal, the valley through which runs the high road to Vevay and the Lake of Geneva. Independent of being the starting-point for the ascent of the Niesen, it is an exceedingly pleasant place of rest, whence also you may proceed, by Frutigen, to the giddy precipices of the Gemmi. So primitive are the ways of the place, and so honest the people, that the front door of my pension was left open to the public all night long, without any one dreaming it to be an imprudent act. It is also one of the stations where you may fall in with German new-married couples, sitting hand in hand all day long and gloating into each others' eyes without entertaining the slightest suspicion that they are making themselves supremely ridiculous.

The Niesen is another excellent

test-walk; if you cannot do that without being distressed, you had better let really alpine work alone. Neither will it suit economical tourists, like one we once fell in with in Scotland, who begged a chance companion not to walk so fast, because he could not afford to sweat. Nevertheless, the girls of the neighbourhood make a mere sport of scaling the Niesen; and curious enough, they are fond of night ascents! The motive, doubtless, is the spectacle of sunrise, and not any vain flirtations by the way. The path is just so plain that it would be hard to lose it, and just so narrow and steep in places that the fair ones cannot refuse a little guidance and help. Beware, however, of letting them sit on an anthill, or near a wasp's nest.

We have heard of Pelion piled upon Ossa; our Niesen is something of the sort. The natives reckon three mountains from the bottom to the top; 'Drei Berge von Wimmis hinauf.' The first is the Schmidzberglein; the second, the Stalden; the third, the Niesen proper, or the upper Niesen. The chalet at the foot of the Stalden offers wine and delicious water, with a bench and table on which to sit and drink them. You pay for the wine a little dear; you give what you please for the water, which gushes from the spring, clear, cool and bright; the bench and the table are gratuitous fixtures which shrink from neither snow nor sunshine. A few tufts of nettles prove their fondness for the neighbourhood of human dwellings. All the wine brought hither mounts on men's backs; to the Niesen, higher up, it is conveyed on horseback. Now a bottle of wine weighs about three pounds; and a man will carry on his back, twenty bottles as a load—a tolerable burthen on level ground, a very respectable one with all the way up hill. Who would grudge the poor fellow his profit so gained, while drinking a drop to give the strength for an unburthened ascent?

Other things besides wine are carried up to the top on the shoulders of men.

'Bread, and meat, and poultry,

fish, and all that sort of thing, I suppose?

'Of course; and there's one thing I advise you to carry up, without fail—namely, a dry and warm flannel shirt. As for the rest, you may as well give it up; you would never guess it, if I gave you a week. From Stalden, you may be conveyed the rest of the way upwards in an 'oberaf,' a sort of chair which fits upon the porter's shoulders. He stoops; you take your seat in the chair, with your back to his but a little above it; he rises, and then commences his sturdy march Excelsior. Inquiring of one of these strong-backed worthies what his charge was for a lady, he told me that his usual fee was no more than

the moderate sum of ten francs! I should be sorry to do it myself for double the money.

'But if the lady is fat?' I asked.

'Das mir ist gleich;' 'That's all one to me,' he said, 'so I do but earn ten francs.'

When we remember that the guide-post at the foot of the Niesen marks three leagues and three-quarters as the distance to the top; that a light untrammelled walker thinks something of himself if he gets up in five hours and down in three; we may wonder that these mountaineers do not beg or steal instead of carrying fat women, singlehanded, to the inn at the summit, at the cheap rate of eight shillings per head.

LEAR'S FOOL.

Fiction and Fact.

TWO women, nobly nurtured, sister-twins
In beauty such as might have won the prize
Of Paris from the world, lost Actium
For other Anthonys, or burnt new Troys,
Met to take counsel of the closing day.
One, half reclined upon a crimson couch,
Her cheek supported by her dimpled hand,
Her finger bound by that encircling hoop
Which either stamps its impress deep for life,
Or loosely from the care-worn finger slips.
The other rested firm with elbow laid
Composed upon a marble chimney slab.
On her down-drooping finger life had laid
No burthen yet. She was the first to speak.

'I heard you were alone; and so I came.'

'Am I not ever thus? More lonely still
When he is here than when he stays away.
I might as well be barred within a cage,
And twitter on a turf four inches square,
While all the bright-plumed creatures of the earth
Lent the glad hours their wings, as live shut up
In this old house with no one but—'

'A mate.'

'A nothing—a mere book-worm, not a bird.'

'I grieve that you should find the hours so dull:
The more because I urged you to this course.
Indeed I thought you needed but the link
Of shared delights free from the busy crowd;
The books together read; your harp, his voice;
Or quiet converse flecked with sparkling wit.

You ne'er are wanting in a ready word :
 'Tis strange he is so dull as not to strike
 The sparks of fancy——'

'At the fancy ball
 We did exchange a few smart repartees.
 You know he was old Lear, and I the Fool.'

'Cannot you play the Fool at home?'

'I did once try; but it was dreary work.
 I called him "Nuncle." But he said the word
 Had a sad sound for him. I asked him why.
 He answered that a lovely girl he knew
 Often performed that part to royal Lear;
 That there was something—but he faltered there,
 And said his work awaited him, his books
 Must all be got through for the next "Review,"
 And thoughts of trouble hindered his free mind.'

'You helped him with his reading? read the least
 Important of the volumes, while he took
 In hand the works on subjects more profound?'

'I never thought to do so. Is it right
 For any one but him to read and judge?'

'Why, there you show a conscience keen as his.
 Well, no; you're right. He could not leave the task
 Alone to such a novice as my Anne;
 Yet something you might help, if but to guide
 His choice in singling out the worthiest—
 But what is here? Why, what a choice bouquet!'

'Yes; Herbert sent it. But what card is that?
 In turning round the flowers, see! you have dropped
 A loose card dangling by a scrawl of string.'

'It bears a brief direction—"Miss Latour,
 Great Titchfield Street."'

'The actress!'

'So it seems.'

'Tied to the flowers!'

'Why do you pale and shake?'

'The flowers—the flowers were never meant for me!'

'Well, what is there in that? The gift is good
 Let it be given to whomever it may.
 What horror speaks in your wide eyes?'

'The name—
 The name!—This woman must be Shakespeare's Fool!'

'Beware—beware, lest fiction's fools are fooled
 By those of fact! You lose your self-command.
 Pardon,—I am disturbed to see you thus.
 The light has faded from your golden hair;
 Your lips are livid. Pray, oh pray rely——'

'This is the name he could not speak to me;—
 That choked his voice—that troubled all his thoughts.
 I am betrayed—betrayed! Take, take those flowers
 And shed their hateful blossoms on the wind!
 The rose of all my life is crushed and dead
 Since Herbert is untrue!'

'One word——'

'Not one!'

'There must be some mistake.'

'There is, there is!

That half-wit boy his charity supports,
Whom many a time I've urged him to dismiss,
Has all mistook his errand. That address,
Tied to the blossoms, should have borne them winged
With love—to Miss Latour!

'Tis strange; unlike

The man I've known so many a noble year.'

'You knew him ne'er till now!'

'Judge him not yet,

And on such evidence,—so slight, so weak
To weigh against the verdict of a world
That honours him as one in whom no fault—
Even such as in that world is lightly held—
Has ever marred the whiteness of his life.
What if I judged you as you judge of him?
What if I said you lacked in charity
In begging him dismiss that half-wit boy
Who earns the crust his bed-ridden mother needs?
Why now you flush with anger. Did he so,
When you bore hard upon the orphan?—Anne!
I do believe in my most hopeful heart
No thought of his has wronged you. I have known
This poor Emile Latour. The girl is one
Devoted to a crippled father's care;
Of life most spotless; beautiful as day.
Why start? If true there's beauty in her face,
The more unwise to mar your own with frowns.
The flowers, if meant for her—but 'tis not sure—
Must have been sent to cheer the cripple's room.
Or, say they were for her; well, what of that?—
Quick! pluck the thorn of doubt from off your cheek,
See, here he comes.'

'What! you here, Bell.—So, Anne,

You got your flowers, I see. Why here's the card
I sent to Miss Latour!—That idiot boy!
Well, 'tis no matter: she has learnt ere this
By other signs agreed on, that the coast
Is clear for flight. By this time she's on board.—
You stare. The secret's out. Sweet cousin Bell,
And you, my little wife, draw nearer:—so.
Now listen while I tell a pleasant tale
Of Lear's poor Fool.

You've heard of Miss Latour?

You knew her the best daughter in the world.
Few knew she was a wife. Half for the sake
Of her old crippled father; half in fear
Of such temptations as her calling threw
Still ever in her way; she gave her hand
To a mere shifter of the playhouse scenes.
The man turned out a drunkard and a brute,
And was dismissed for wardrobe pilfering.
Haunting the theatre but to seize her gains,
He beat and bruised her in her humble home.

She bore up bravely—till a child was born.
 Then would this shame of manhood take the child
 From out the mother's arms, and swear to part
 The treasure from her breast, unless—unless—
 In short, unless she found him larger sums
 To satisfy his vicious drunken greed.
 Friends helped her: gave large sums. And day by day
 So bought the mother back her bosom's child!
 This could not last. The actors took it up.
 And one—all honour to his noble name!—
 Poor fellow! he went down amid the seas
 Before his cup of sweet humanity
 Was full. Well, I must close my tale in haste.
 Her father's dead; and she is safe beyond
 The wretch's power: sails for America
 With the first breeze to-morrow. There she owns
 A brother will be guardian to her child
 And her.—My Anne, you're weeping.'

'Mind not me.

'Tis not the tale: 'tis that strong heliotrope
 That makes me faint.'

'Why what a fool was I

To choose so badly when I bought the gift:
 In all the lore of flowers that seek the sun,
 I am as ignorant as an owl. What, you too, Bell!'

'That's the verbena! 'Tis a pungent plant.
 'Twould prick the tears out of a core of flint.'

'Nay, never mask your tenderness. I see
 The tale has touched you—could almost believe
 That something even deeper than the tale——'

'Good cousin Herbert, search us not too closely.
 Our thoughts are sometimes contraband of war:—
 A little smuggling, too, we do besides.
 Yet 'tis not in your Articles of War,
 Nor in your Customs' duties noted down,
 That you should cry, with every change of mood,
 "Stand and deliver!" like a highwayman.
 Our women's hearts are riddles to you gods.
 We've been a little foolish, both of us.—
 Our errors lie in our poor fledgeless souls
 That shiver in their nests before their wings
 Have cast the down.—Ay, take her to your breast.—
 I leave you to your golden wedding, Anne:
 For golden breaks the sun your passing cloud.
 Be sure he'll give you work enough to do.
 She wants to meddle, Herbert, with your books.
 But now farewell: one waits for me at home.
 To-morrow I shall be my Harry's bride.
 Till then, to-morrow, farewell to you both!'

ELEANORA L. HERVEY.





She bore up bravely—till a child was born.
Then would this shame of manhood take the child
From out the mother's arms, and swear to part
The babe from home her breast, unless—unless—
In some house she found him larger sons
To carry on the blood-drunken greed.
Where?—where?—she gave large sums. And day by day
She sought the mother back her home's child!
The mother was not lost. The sisters took it up.
"All honour to his noble name!"—
"Where?—where?—I'll wait down until the sun
Shine his cup of sweet humanity
Is full." Well, I must close my tale in haste.
Her father's dead; and she is safe beyond
The witch's power: sails for America
With the first breeze to-morrow. There she owns
A brother will be guardian to her child
And her.—My Azee, you're weeping.

'Mind tell me

'Tis not the tale; 'tis that strong heliotrope
That makes me faint!

'Why what a sad tale I

'Tis almost as badly when I bought the gift:
It is all the love of flowers that seek the sun,
I am so ignorant as an owl. What, you too, Bell?"

'This is the worst tale! 'Tis a pungent point.
I am so ignorant as an owl, I am so ignorant as an owl.

'This is the worst tale! 'Tis a pungent point.
I am so ignorant as an owl, I am so ignorant as an owl.

'Good words! But, search us not too closely.
Our thoughts are sometimes confounded of war—
A little, weeping, too, we do besides.
Yet 'tis not in your Articles of War,
Nor in your Customs' duties noted down,
That you should cry, with every change of mood,
"Stand and deliver!" like a highwayman.
Our women's hearts are riddles to you gods.
We're been a little foolish, both of us—
Our errors lie in our poor beggar's souls
That shiver in their nests before their wings
Have cast the down.—Ay, take her to your breast.—
I leave you to your golden wedding, same!
For golden breaks the sun your passing cloud.
Be sure he'll give you work enough to do.
She wants to meddle, Herbert, with your work.
But now farewell: one waits for me at home.
To-morrow I shall be my Harry's bride.
Till then, to-morrow, farewell to you both!"

BERNARD L. HARVEY.





Drawn by 'Scribble'

LEAR'S FOOL.

[See the Poem.]

PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES.

CHAPTER XXII.

JOHN WILMOT.

WHEN John Wilmot had parted with Ellen Bowden on the occasion of the latter's leaving for London, he had bemoaned himself bitterly and openly, as became a loving frank boy, and Ellen had shown superior self-command, and had developed that almost cruelly comforting manner which the one who is soundest at heart alone can show. He had been fearful, jealous, hopeless about her and her stability, and she had sought to assuage these various passions in her own sensible, affectionate, truthful way, and had failed while she was still present with him. But when they were wide apart and John Wilmot was free from the painful excitement of hearing what might befall Ellen in London perpetually discussed, he began to reassert his own masculine superiority to absence, distance, and change—to console himself with the reflection that his own true instincts would have saved him from the snares of a false woman for his first true love, and to be generally sanguine.

So he continued for the first few weeks of Ellen's stay with her aunt, Mrs. Sutton; so he continued long after Ellen's letters became mere circulars apologizing for not having 'written before' and for 'not writing more now' (for the effusions whose frequent exit from her house Marian sagaciously ignored contained little more than these sentences); so he continued until further patient continuance would have been a weakness, and then he took thought as to the path it would be well for him to pursue, and finally decided on going up to see her.

He did not much care whether or not he would be welcome to the presiding powers of the house in which she was dwelling. He loved Ellen Bowden, and it was Ellen Bowden alone whom he had to consider. Such love as his for the girl he had known all her life her uncle and

aunt would be powerless to compensate her for, if they caused her to lose it. So he went up with the determination fixed firmly in his mind that she should not lose it if fond efforts of his could teach her how to keep it still.

He was a good-looking young fellow, with the good looks of height and health, of honour and honesty; dark, clear-complexioned, open-eyed, with short curly brown hair and the upright bearing and slinging step of one who is no stranger to the carrying a gun and the breaking in of a thoroughbred colt. He had received greater educational advantages than the sons of yeomen usually receive, for he had been a private pupil in the house of the vicar of his father's parish, and the vicar was a gentleman and a scholar; and he was a young man gifted with the grace of making the most of these advantages, for he had kept his mind from rusting by going through a course of reading of the English classics, slowly but regularly, since he had come from the vicar's supervision. Accordingly he had shone as a star of some magnitude in Ellen Bowden's little world. His selection of her had been deemed an honour; for report said that the vicar's daughter would have smiled upon him if he had sought her smiles. Altogether, Ellen Bowden was regarded by herself and others as a very fortunate girl when it became generally known that she was going to marry young John Wilmot.

He had never liked the plan of her going up to London to be polished as her mother called it. 'She was quite polished enough for a farmer's wife,' he said, 'and he never wanted her to seem or to be thought more than a farmer's wife.' They were young and happy and they loved each other dearly, and there was nothing to stop their wedding immediately and being free to show how happy and loving they

were—nothing to stop it, save this freak of Mrs. Bowden's that Ellen should go up to London to see life and be polished by intercourse with Martin's lady wife, Mrs. Sutton.

He kept up a hopeful heart about this girl with whom he looked forward to passing his life, until her letters, from being brief and cold, ceased altogether. That was her aunt's influence, he told himself, her lady aunt, who probably did not want further connection with rough country people, and who perhaps deemed Ellen pretty enough to command a better match in town. However, it was certainly not her aunt's mission in life to step between him and his wife, for that Ellen would have been by this time had she not gone up to be polished. Accordingly he resolved to go up and see how things were going—resolved to go up and battle for his rights against the subtle influence which was weaning his love from him.

He had many dark and angry thoughts about Mrs. Sutton in his mind as he travelled up. He pictured her to himself as a high-nosed, haughty-mannered, handsome, heartless woman, who would try to make him uncomfortable by being cold and distant to him. If she was this, he told himself he would put it plainly to Ellen that she would be wanting in some of the fine respect and consideration a woman should have for her future husband if she did not at once side with him and leave her aunt. It would be their lives—Ellen's and his—that would be welded together: no temporary alliance with her aunt ought to be maintained by the girl at the cost of a rift in their future permanent one.

He reached Mrs. Sutton's house about six o'clock in the evening, and before his appeal at the door was answered the trampling of horses made him look round to see Ellen, accompanied by a lady and gentleman, ride up to the steps. The lady was young, fair, bewitchingly pretty and gentle looking. He never thought for an instant that she could be the terrible aunt whom he had come up to beard in her own den. Indeed he did not think of

anything, it must be acknowledged, for a minute or two, as Ellen stooped forward and held out her hand to him as he started forward to meet her, and exclaimed—

'Oh! John, how you frightened me! Aunt Marian, let me introduce Mr. John Wilmot.'

'Quite a young Apollo,' was Mrs. Sutton's mental remark, as she bowed gracefully and languidly to the young man whom she feared might interfere with several of her present plans. Then she dismounted with the aid of her cavalier, and determined to 'disarm Orson by courtesy.'

'Let me hope that you will dine with us at seven, and go with Elly and me to a concert afterwards,' she said, sweetly. 'You must have a great deal of home news to give your old friend, and I cannot let her stay to hear it now, for we must go and dress—but dine with us at seven.'

John Wilmot accepted the invitation with a greater amount of embarrassment than he had ever before believed it possible he could feel in the presence of any woman, even if she were a queen. He was not quite sure of what it behoved him to do. Should he go in at once—go in to the palace of this fairy queen? or should he retire to the depths of his hotel and dress himself in the most fitting array he possessed for the banquet?

'I will come—I shall be very happy,' he stammered; and then he looked round to see whether or not Ellen was very happy in his acceptance of the invitation. But Ellen was springing from her horse at the moment, and he could not catch her eye.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. SUTTON'S LITTLE DINNER.

John Wilmot had an extraordinarily good physique. He was one of those men with small heads, set well on between square shoulders, who, by reason of their bodily strength, rarely look mentally weak. For instance, on this occasion, though he had gone through several phases of nervousness between the moment of re-

ceiving Mrs. Sutton's invitation and the moment of his accepting it, there was no trace of the torture upon him when at length he walked into Marian's drawing-room. That lady herself, turning round to watch his approach and welcome him, acknowledged that the young yeoman might almost be a gentleman.

His nervousness had been a vague feeling, created by vague causes. Unlike a woman under similar circumstances, he had not sought to give form and substance to the experience that was about to come to him. He had only felt strongly convinced that he should that evening find himself in a society, and amidst surroundings, of the usages of which he was utterly ignorant. He had only feared that this ignorance might manifest itself, and lower him in the eyes of Ellen.

But now, when he came into the room, he exercised so much constraint over himself as to seem, even to the keen blue eyes of Marian Sutton, to be very much at ease. The two ladies, the aunt and niece, felt the fact with a throb of surprise—the latter with a throb of pleasure that he bore himself as best became him; that the happy medium manner existed in a quarter where they could not reasonably have looked for it.

'It is like old days to see you again, John,' Ellen said, as John Wilmot came over to the side of the chair in which she was lounging and fanning herself.

'Yes, it must seem as though you had only been separated for a day or two,' Mrs. Sutton put in; 'it always does seem so, I notice, when intimate friends meet unless either has altered very much.'

'Then one of us must have altered very much,' John Wilmot answered, decidedly; 'seeing her in this way neither reminds me of old days, nor makes me think the old days anything but long past.'

'He shall mark the difference more before I have done with him,' Marian thought: she said aloud—

'What nonsense we all talk about "old times," to be sure; when, if the truth were told, there is not one in a thousand who would wish to

live them over again. I would not, for one; would you, Ellen?'

'The present is so pleasant to me that I can't wish for any change, Aunt Marian,' Ellen said, deprecatingly; and then John Wilmot could not help feeling that the change from this room, with its delicately-papered walls, where glittering mirrors reproduced the profusely scattered beauties of art which Marian had delighted in collecting, to the best parlour of the house he sighed to make Ellen mistress of, would be great indeed.

His eyes mirrored his thoughts, as he let them fall questioningly, regretfully, lovingly, on the girl who had promised to marry him. She was changed; she was very much changed. His eyes told him that she was improved; but his heart rebelled against the improvement. It was not of an order to conduce to the comfort of the homely-appointed farm-house where her lines would be cast if she were faithful to him and to herself.

The change was too subtle for the blunt, honest mind of the young man to analyze it. It was expressed in everything: in posture, in dress, in tone; and still, when he tried, he could not define it to himself. He had seen her in silks and muslins often of old; this robe that she wore now was only silk; and yet it seemed a far more exalted material than it belonged to women of his order to wear. As Ellen went on speaking to him, still leaning back lazily, with a self-possession that was new to him in her, still slowly waving the big black Spanish fan to and fro, he felt that she would be incongruous in his best parlour.

'My husband is away from home, Mr. Wilmot,' Mrs. Sutton said, presently, 'but we have not victimised you to the extent of making you our sole escort: Arthur Eldale is coming too; isn't it gorgeous of him?'

'Why?' John Wilmot asked.

'Oh, custom commands that gratitude be felt and shown when Arthur Eldale sacrifices himself at a concert and a quiet dinner to precede it,' the lady replied, laughing.

Now a dinner at seven o'clock,

and a concert to follow, represented much dissipation to John Wilmot's mind. It had been his proud and happy fate to attend three or four fifth-rate musical meetings in the market-town where Ellen used to live; and these had been gala-days to him. He had worn a flower in his coat on one occasion he remembered, and gloves that were too tight, and that hurt him in the wrist; but he had been happy in hearing 'Come into the garden, Maud,' sung by some one whom the local papers the next day declared to be a formidable rival to Sims Reeves. He could not understand why gratitude should be felt and evinced to Mr. Arthur Eldale for sharing such pleasures in such company. Before he could be instructed as to the reason, Ellen said—

'He will make dinner late, I know, in order to get out of the first part.'

'I shall be very glad if he does,' Mrs. Sutton yawned; 'that trio for the piano, violin, and violoncello will be sweeter to me unheard.'

'There's a fantasia, too, in the first part that will be an awful bore,' Ellen said; 'on airs from "Trovatore," I think.'

'Why do you go, if it's such an awful bore, Ellen?' John Wilmot asked; 'you used to think enough of a concert, if it was good.'

'I never heard a decent one till I came to town,' she said, contemptuously. 'Oh, Aunt Marian! you can't realise how our ears used to be tortured by people who would sing when they had neither voice, nor method, nor talent, nor anything else: ours is such an over-looked corner of the world that it has cut out of the route of the stars.'

Mrs. Sutton smiled languidly. 'Poor child! I am so sorry that we can't do anything you like better to-night; Eldale has made us discontented by talking of that new piece at the Adelphi.'

'I suppose you have taken your tickets for this, and so you must go?' John Wilmot said, innocently.

Mrs. Sutton smiled again. 'Unfortunately, our tickets are given to us by the giver of the concert,' she

said. 'A young lady, a friend of mine, makes her *début* to-night as a pianist; she is sure to be a great success, and I am much interested in her: that is our reason for going.'

'Oh! and you know her?' John Wilmot said, with rather clumsy surprise. Just then Mr. Eldale was announced, and the four went in to dinner.

Then John Wilmot's surprise increased. He had expected to see a handsome room, and a good table; but Mrs. Sutton knew what she was about, and was resolved to make both him and Ellen mark well the difference that existed between them now. It was not a noble-minded thing to do; but Marian had not a noble mind, and so she did it.

The dining-room was brilliantly lighted, and the scent of mignonette filled the room. The party was so small to-day that the lady of the house had ordained that the repast should be served on a small oval table near to the window—a glittering oasis in a desert of Turkey carpet. Mr. Wilmot had dined at audit dinners, and at other great agricultural feasts, but he was, for all these experiences, a little thrown off his balance by the sight of the means by which his hunger was to be appeased to-night. He felt himself—this son of the soil—to be large and common, as he sat down before the snowy damask, and wondered if he was to drink out of each one of the many-shaped and coloured wine-glasses, that shone, and glanced, and gleamed at his right hand. And the vase of roses in the centre, and the graceful specimen glass, with a single rare flower in it standing by the forks, they made him feel how far more fittingly Ellen was situated amongst them, than she would be in a room whose floral adornments consisted of asparagus in the fireplace, and a conglomeration of many-coloured flowers in what his mother called the bow-pot on the mantelpiece.

Mr. Arthur Eldale, also, was not a tranquillising element to John in this party of four. He was a man of about thirty-five or forty, dark, distinguished-looking, and gifted with

a glibness of utterance, a facility of articulation, that made John Wilmot feel as if his words would all tumble out of his mouth the wrong way. And Mr. Eldale talked of so many things, and had been to so many places, and was apparently 'up' in all the sports that the young farmer had hitherto thought were specialities of country-born and bred men.

The dinner went by like a dream to the young man, who had never dined in such a way before. Really like a dream; for only in a dream could he conceive the possibility of savoury dishes being wafted before him, and white-clothed hands filling many-coloured glasses with sparkling liquids that made the voices of the others sound far away. Only in a dream could Ellen turn from him impatiently to listen to a stranger! Only in a dream could it come to him to feel that he was unworthy in some way, though he had never in all his unspotted young life been guilty of one unworthy or lowering act.

It was over at last, that sparkling feast, whereat poor John Wilmot had been at such a disadvantage. It was over; and the two ladies were gone up-stairs to get their cloaks, and gloves, and fans, and the two men were left alone. And then John Wilmot did indeed feel that all his good angels had deserted him, and that he was not feeling as man should feel before man, in the presence of this stranger, who had the gift of being inoffensive offensively.

Just at first Mr. Eldale kept silence; and that sunk John Wilmot in his own estimation. Then Mr. Eldale spoke; and that sunk John still more, for he was not clear as to what it behoved him to answer. 'I suppose you know your fate, eh?' the gentleman observed, coolly; and poor John Wilmot wondered whether Mr. Eldale meant his (John's) fate with Ellen, and what it would be well for him to say. At last he said—

'I am not sure that I do know it.'

'You don't mean that they have trapped you in here without telling

you what they are going to do with you, do you?'

Arthur Eldale laughed, turning round and carelessly leaning his arm over the back of his chair: 'You're to be taken to hear a trio in C minor.'

'What is that?' John Wilmot interrogated.

'The very devil when you have to listen to it, when you would rather be somewhere else,' the other replied. Then he added, quickly, 'That will not be the case with us to-night, though. Ah! "I said she was fairer than Dian,"' he quoted, rising up and going to meet her with an air of homage as Mrs. Sutton, in diaphanous drapery, floated into the room followed by Ellen.

Once more, while they were waiting for the carriage to be announced, John Wilmot felt strangely oppressed by the mystery of the difference that had come between him and Ellen. She looked kindly at him, and she spoke kindly to him, but she did these things without that sympathetically kindred air which had formerly existed between them. Ellen, playing with a fan and gloves, and a scent-bottle and a pair of lorgnettes, was an utterly different Ellen to the Ellen of old, who would probably have dropped half of them in country girlish clumsiness had they been put into her hands when he saw her last. The change of manner in his old familiar friend, though that manner still lacked the subtle refinements and delicacies of Mrs. Sutton's, put Ellen and himself farther apart than he felt himself to be from Mrs. Sutton. It was strange, but it was so.

The dream-like influence of the dinner was about him still as he sat in the small room at St. James's Hall and listened to strains that made his ears tingle. They tingled with two sensations, those unsophisticated ears of his. In the first place he felt compunction for having ventured to institute a comparison between the melodies that had been sweet to him in his native wilds with those that went swelling up and down in this gas-lighted hall, and that issued from the throats of those whom he was staggered to

find 'looked like real ladies and gentlemen.' He did not dream of offending; he was only superbly ignorant of all things out of his own orbit, when Arthur Eldale bent forward to Mrs. Sutton, imploring her to give him an introduction to a young lady who had just won an encore from her manner of singing 'Clear and Cool.'

'Don't be impatient; you shall meet her at dinner at my house next Wednesday,' Marian replied; and then John executed his error and said—

'I thought Mrs. Sutton was a tip-top swell, Elly; does she visit such——?'

'Such what?' Ellen asked, sharply, and before he could explain himself she went on.

'Pray don't make speeches of that sort, John; you don't know, and I can't tell you now, but it's a great honour—well, not that exactly, but quite a thing to be proud of to know artists.'

'Painters?' John asked, inquiringly.

'Yes, painters and—and—oh! all sorts of artists who are anything—great singers and great actors.'

'Our squire never takes any notice of them down in our parts,' John argued, stoutly.

'Our squire is an ignorant, old-fashioned old frump,' Ellen replied, heretically; 'he's just a little king down among you farmers, but he would quickly find his level in London. You see you are his inferiors,' she went on in an explanatory tone, 'but in society he would only mix with his social equals or his betters, and be no one.'

'Who is Mr. Eldale?' John asked, when he had partially recovered about the most severe rebuff a girl could administer to a man who loved her.

'Oh, everybody knows Mr. Eldale,' Ellen replied, impatiently, and then she remembered that her young agricultural friend was nobody, and considerably added, 'at least not to know him augurs yourself unknown; he knows every one and goes everywhere, and he is so clever ever so many ways—paints and sings and rides like an angel; and he has such

a house, Orrey Court, near to Hyde Park, and such lovely horses; it was one of his horses I was riding to-day,' the girl continued, blushing with pleasure.

'He's very rich, I suppose?' the young farmer asked, slowly.

'Immensely. Aunt Marian says he draws at least ten thousand a year from a great brewery.'

'And so you're in love with a rich brewer.' John Wilmot's attempt at jocularity was painfully clumsy.

'Don't call him that, pray,' the girl said, scornfully. 'Several noblemen, earls, and dukes have shares in things, monster hotels and things of that sort, in this speculative age. In love with him! I might as well be in love with the Prince Imperial. Mr. Eldale might marry any one, Aunt Marian says: don't talk trash about him and me.'

'And any one might be glad to marry you, Elly,' John said, with the feeble infatuation of a lover; 'I only wish I could to-morrow.'

'Mr. Eldale is a gentleman; you're different, you know.' And Marian heard her pupil say this, and thought it was time to come to the rescue.

She came so gracefully, according to her wont. These women, who wound with silver knives and bind the same with fine linen, are likeable though they are dangerous. They are likeable because of that habit they have of passing their hands over rough or sore places tenderly, with the tenderness that comes of ease of manner and self-possession of mind, and that has nothing whatever to do with the heart. So she came forward now, just as though she had heard nothing, and saw no necessity for such coming forward, and put herself and her kindness in sharp contrast with Elly's ingratitude towards the old friend whom she loved, though she was ashamed of him.

'What are you wishing about to-morrow?' she murmured. 'Are you wishing what I wish, I wonder? are you wishing that we may all ride together to-morrow between twelve and two? I have heard of your powers on horseback, Mr. Wilmot, from Elly. You can show me how

to make Cavalier change his leg; he's getting rough, you know, and it does worry me that he should lose his paces.'

She said it all with an air of regarding Mr. Wilmot as one who was perfectly *au fait* with all that concerned herself and her horse. She was an adept in the art of putting men on good terms with themselves, which was only a preliminary step to their being put on good terms with her. She pleased that she might be pleased, in fact, and she generally got good interest for her outlay.

'I'm not much good 'cept cross country,' he said, gruffly. How heartily he wished that he was going 'cross country' now, undismayed by the slightly supercilious glances of Mr. Eldale and his own old love, Ellen; 'and I have nothing to ride up here,' he added, with an abrupt exercise of his reflective powers.

'You can get a capital mount from Blackman,' Mrs. Sutton replied. 'Go there to-morrow morning and suit yourself, and join us in the Row at half-past twelve.' Then she remembered that John Wilmot might possibly be ignorant of who and what Blackman was, and (unlike Ellen in this) she would not crush him by seeming to see his hesitating comprehension of the situation of the well-known stables. 'Let me assure myself that you will be my escort, our escort, to-morrow, Mr. Wilmot,' she went on, winningly; 'let my groom take the responsibility of selecting a horse for you, and start with us from my house to-morrow at a quarter-past twelve, will you?'

Would he? What man under similar circumstances would not have done the same thing as John Wilmot did gladly, namely, promised to be with Mrs. Sutton at any hour, and to ride with her on any horse she liked? And when he had promised—a little more loudly than was perhaps well in a temporary lull in the concert—he looked at Ellen, and tried to make her eyes speak approval of his acquiescence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE ROW.

Mrs. Sutton was already dressed for her ride when John Wilmot went into her drawing-room the following day. She was standing by the window gently switching her side with her whip, with a look of impatience on her face. She turned quickly as the door opened, and the impatient expression vanished instantly.

'Ah! it is you,' she said; 'I have been watching for you.' Then she gave him her hand kindly, so kindly that it made him think how different the niece, his old love, was to her aunt, his new friend.

'Ellen is late,' Mrs. Sutton went on: then they heard the sharp trot of a horse rapidly approaching, and Marian laughed, and added, 'the signal for her to make her appearance is sounded.'

'What do you mean, Mrs. Sutton?' the young farmer asked.

'Mr. Eldale's horse's hoofs,' she replied.

'It was on the tip of his tongue to exclaim—'

'Does she care for him, then?' but he refrained, and only said, 'Is Ellen going to ride his horse again to-day?'

'Yes,' Mrs. Sutton said, and then she held her hand out towards him and asked him, 'Is it not abominable that gauntlet gloves should only be made in sizes too large for me? These bag, and make my hands look horrible.'

'That they don't,' he said, bluntly. Sore as his heart was about Ellen, he could not help seeing Mrs. Sutton's hand, and, seeing it, he could not help admiring it. It was a lovely hand in truth, a far prettier hand than had ever been held out in friendship or flirtation to the young farmer before. Clearly it belonged to a class above him. He felt this, and sighed as he remembered that the lady who owned it was the aunt of the girl he wanted to marry. He recovered his spirits as he reflected that she was only the aunt by marriage, no blood relation at all, in fact.

'I wish Mr. Eldale would lend me

such a mare as Ellen rides,' Mrs. Sutton said, presently, a little complainingly; 'my horse pulls at me cruelly always when I am riding with other people, especially when I ride with Ellen, for she lets her mare pull ahead of mine, and Cavalier can't stand that. Will you be my escort to-day,' she said, winningly, 'and so save my poor hands from being torn to pieces?'

'Yes, if you like,' he replied, a little discontentedly, and then Ellen came down and they started, Mr. Eldale and Ellen falling behind at once, and Mrs. Sutton absorbing as much of the rustic Apollo's attention as she could, by playing off (through the unsuspected influences of a spur) every trick of 'riding' that she knew.

He felt aggrieved in a measure, this rustic Apollo, on whom this graceful woman of the world believed herself to be conferring a colossal boon by noticing him at all. He felt himself to be aggrieved for all this condescension. He had come up expressly to see Ellen, and to win Ellen back into the right way of thinking as regarded himself. He had come up for this end and for no other; and it had been in his programme that he would hold himself aloof not haughtily, but independently from such of her people as had chilled her heart towards him. These were the ends he had come up for, and he had not fulfilled one of them. How should he have done so, when he had nothing but his honesty of purpose, and his ignorance of all things beyond his farmyard and turnip-fields to oppose to the subtlety of this gentlewoman bred and born who had set herself against his plans?

The dainty lady managed him well. The Row was crowded, and many of Mrs. Sutton's acquaintances pulled up to speak to her as she reined in close to the railings at the Piccadilly end of the ride. People were curious to know who Mrs. Sutton had caught in her toils, for Marian's peculiarities were no secrets. 'Handsome, but bad style,' was the verdict pronounced after the first keen, apparently careless glance bestowed on the young man

whose seat, hands, and clothes were all perfect; but who lacked the nameless something which gentlemen possess.

John Wilmot was very silent, and for this Marian was heartily grateful. Had he insisted on talking before any of her friends, his pronouncement would have broken down her plans of keeping him away from Ellen, and so giving Ellen a chance with Mr. Eldale—whose money in the family was to be the family's salvation Marian thought. But John Wilmot brooded over his inability to get speech with Ellen in silence, when they paused by the railings, and when they were cantering down the Row, he might say what he liked, no one could hear him.

She was very like a cat playing with a mouse in her manners to this 'son of the soil,' as she called him to herself. She knew every art, every trick, every bit of finesse by which the taste of man can be touched, and his heart turned towards woman. And she practised all she knew. Giving him attention, sweet smiles, kind words, asking his opinion on subjects of which he might reasonably be supposed to have one, and generally not suffering him to feel himself at a disadvantage while he was with her. And all these things which Marian did, Ellen left undone, being deficient in that fine tact which would have made her aunt please and flatter both men under similar circumstances.

Meanwhile the foiler was being foiled. Externally the arrangement which clever Marian had made was carrying itself out beautifully; but in reality it was as complete a failure as it deserved. It was all a waste of time and talent that Mr. Eldale should have been lured into offering his horse to Ellen, and manoeuvred into a position at her side in the crowded Row, for he was chafing in spirit the whole time, and laughing bitterly at the weakness which could conceive itself to be capable of compromising him into making an offer to the vulgar little country girl to whom he was only kind for the sake of her

amusing, pretty, interesting young aunt. Mr. Eldale had an aptitude for many things, but he had no aptitude for being married against his will, and it would never be his will to marry Ellen.

Already the poor girl was beginning to pay the penalty demanded of those who play with fire. She had commenced by regarding Mr. Eldale as the stars above her, and as she had said to John Wilmot the night before, as the Prince Imperial. But at last he was so kind and considerate, and he seemed to wish her to ride his horse, and other versions of the King Cophetua story would obtrude themselves on her mind, and she was only a woman. At last love began to mingle itself insidiously with admiring reverence, and to poison all the future to her when she fancied that she might have to pass it with John Wilmot, instead of with the graceful gentleman who would sooner have cut his throat than marry her.

It made her tremble, and her heart went down with a dull thud, when after a sharp trot they pulled up at some distance from Mrs. Sutton and John Wilmot, and Mr. Eldale broke silence by saying—

‘I suppose it is coming to a climax by *la belle* aunt devoting herself to him so entirely: he is a fine young fellow—when is it to be?’

‘When is what to be?’ Ellen stuttered out, with a mixture of pain and mortification that she had never experienced about the subject before. She knew what he meant quite well, and it hurt her horribly that he should speak of the man he supposed she would marry as ‘a fine young fellow,’ just as though John were nothing more.

Then pang the second smote her. He was ‘a fine young fellow,’ and he was nothing more. Her heart swelled with sorrow that it should ever have been given to one on whom Mr. Eldale looked down. ‘Why did he come up to shame her?’ she thought, with the tears in her eyes. And then Mr. Eldale looked at her, and marked that she sat badly, and that her face was puffed up with heat and suppressed emotion, and wondered why he suf-

fered himself to be seen with such a pair of bumpkins. ‘Why does not Marian get rid of them both; let them go back to their native wilds and marry; what can her little game be?’ he soliloquized, as he saw and understood the full force of order of the little airs and graces which Marian was bringing to bear on the ‘rustic Apollo.’

That morning’s ride was not too pleasant to any of them, for each wished for another companion, or for that companion to be in another mood. Vague dread—vague depressing dread of an unhappiness to come which she could not avert, darkened Ellen’s soul. Whatever out-look she gazed through she saw nothing but pain and disappointment for either John or herself. And this feeling of utter inability to avoid giving pain to one who is dear as friend still, who has been dear as lover, is agonizingly painful. If he would only ‘speak out,’ as she called it (‘he’ being Mr. Eldale), and John would only go away and wear his heart out in silence where she could not be a witness of his sufferings, the sun of happiness might irradiate her path once more. But as things were now, it was as much as she could do to keep up a fair exterior, and not seem the despondent, love-sick, untrained-in-the-art of concealment country damsel that she was.

‘What are your plans for to-night?’ Mrs. Sutton asked of John Wilmot, when at about half-past one they turned out of the Row, and wended their way homewards. ‘It’s useless, I suppose, expecting you to sacrifice to us at kettle-drum at five?’

‘What is that?’ he asked.

‘One of our latest, nicest follies; tea and talk before dinner. Will you come, though? of course you’ve a thousand other things to do?’

‘I have nothing else to do,’ he replied.

Now, Mr. Wilmot, I own I deserved that answer, for even appearing to suppose that I might charm you away from all your other claims; of course you have a great deal to do—still be with us at five, will you?’

'Would he?' of course he would, when the neatly-worded invitation was backed by such a pair of appealing eyes.

'Now—see how exacting we women grow in proportion to the concessions made: will you drive with us after luncheon? I can introduce you to the best ices in London, so I am worth going with I assure you.'

'Is Ellen going?' he asked bluntly.

Mrs. Sutton nodded assent, and then John Wilmot felt that he had nothing whatever to urge against her proposition. Surely during the course of the drive he would be enabled to say those few potent words to Ellen which he had travelled up to town expressly to utter.

They went home to luncheon—to a well-ordered luncheon, that, like its predecessor the dinner of the day before, made John Wilmot fancy Ellen far above him again while she was eating it. Still for all his fidelity he could not help comparing Ellen with her aunt. It came to him to see that the elder lady managed her figure and her movements in her habit better than his affianced bride. The narrow, clinging folds of cloth did not hamper or fetter Mrs. Sutton in the slightest degree—it became drapery of the most becoming description under her treatment. But Ellen looked far from at home in the garb: she was bewildered by it apparently as soon as she came off her horse, and this John Wilmot felt sorry for and surprised at; for he did not know that it is not given to one woman in a thousand to be a perfectly 'free and fetterless thing' in a habit when walking the earth.

The luncheon occupied a long time; and then Mr. Eldale took leave of them, and the ladies went off to dress. By-and-by the carriage was ready, and Mrs. Sutton came down alone, and so exquisitely arrayed that John Wilmot almost forgot that she was alone for a minute or two. She had been a bewitching beauty to the unsophisticated Apollo in her hat and habit; she was simply bewildering to him

now, in one of Hortense's highest triumphs.

'Won't Elly come?' he recovered his judgment to the extent of asking this question, as he followed the lady who was flattering his boyish pride so deftly down-stairs. Mrs. Sutton just looked back over her shoulder—and the gesture she used was very graceful—and laughed.

'She has a headache, Mr. Wilmot, so you must accept my society alone, in default of better. Ellen will be better by five o'clock: can you put up with me alone?'

He made a clumsy effort to break the chain that was beginning to encircle him.

'You don't mean what you say,' he blurted out; 'you think I ought to be pleased enough to go with you, if you can put up with me; that's what you mean, is it not?'

He faltered a little as he asked this; it would have hurt him so much, poor fellow! to be told the truth, though he asked for it.

She was giving him her hand to help him in even as he spoke; and she gave him just a tiny pressure as he concluded.

'How exacting you all are!' she whispered, smiling; 'you will have the compliment in words as well as in deed always. Why should I ask you to go with me if I did not wish it?'

'I hardly know,' he exclaimed; and then he got in by her side, and the door was banged and the step put up, and they rolled off, he thinking what a blessed thing it would be for him if Ellen were only like her aunt, and she thinking that the farmer was not worth the candle; that her vanity would never receive sufficient gratification from the adulation and adoration of this rustic to compensate her for the strain it was on her to entertain what she denominated 'merely a handsome clown.'

John Wilmot thought it strange that, in what appeared to him to be an interminable, inextricable wilderness of streets and squares, they should meet Mr. Eldale. They had pulled up at Gunter's doors; and Mrs. Sutton was placidly eating an ice, and thinking what a superb

footman John Wilmot would make; and John Wilmot was half blushing at being the escort of a lady who was committing what he had been taught to consider the solecism in manners of eating in the street, when Mr. Eldale sauntered out, and came up to Marian's side of the carriage.

'You here?' she said, laughing.

'It surprises you very much, does it not?'

'No; nothing surprises me,' she answered, carelessly handing the plate to John Wilmot, to carry in for her royally—likewise royally leaving it to him to pay for her luxury. 'Nothing surprises me that you do,' she repeated.

'Do I not do what is pleasing to you now, Marian?' he asked, in a low voice.

'Mrs. Sutton, you mean,' she laughed, holding up her hand warningly. 'No, you do not do what is pleasing to me when you insist on remembering what you ought to forget, and on forgetting what you ought to remember.'

'What do I forget?—very little, I assure you,' he said, quickly; and Mrs. Sutton had only time to say, 'Do be careful,' before John Wilmot came back.

'Where now, Circe?' Mr. Eldale asked, moving from a recumbent to an erect position, and drawing on the one pale grey glove which he had taken off while he was speaking to Mrs. Sutton.

'What a simple one I should be,' she replied, shrugging her shoulders. 'Where?—well, to tell the truth I have seen and been seen enough to-day. I shall go for a quiet drive in Richmond Park. Good-bye: come to me at five and tell me the news.'

And she drove off, nodding and laughing to her friend, causing John Wilmot to get dazzled, and (for some reason or other) to wonder where her husband could be all this time.

CHAPTER XXV.

SILVER-GILT.

Lionel Talbot and Miss Lyon had gone through the first, and perhaps

the worst phase of an engagement. They had declared their intentions respecting each other to all whom it did concern, and to many whom it did not concern, even remotely. This latter statement must, however, be accepted as a truth without questioning; for if the subject were sifted, ingenious gossips would prove (or 'nearly' prove, which with the majority of women is enough) that everybody who has ever spoken to or seen a bride, or bridegroom, has a right to offer felicitations, so dubiously worded that they sound like condolences, and to suggest the existence of causes and impediments to the union of the principal powers.

It must be borne in mind that the neighbourhood in which the fact broke out was a country one; that its interests were small; that its older inhabitants existed rather than lived; and that, socially and, above all, intellectually, stagnation reigned. These conditions fully understood and accepted, as one learns to accept measles, bores, and other drawbacks to life indifferently, the results are to be guessed with precision. No man or woman would be wronged by the marriage when it did take place; but for all that, when the first report of it was heard in the land that was so barren of news, the teeth of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness were gnashed upon the pair, who had not even the grace to smart under the bites.

While Mrs. Sutton, up in London, was trying to recover the ground her husband had lost through her brother in the monetary world, by flirting John Wilmot and Ellen asunder, for the sake of securing Mr. Eldale and his wealth in the family, Blanche and Lionel had been using their brains in a more legitimate manner. There was a strong family feeling—a good, true-toned chord of sympathy between the Talbot brothers, and Lionel did earnestly desire to see Edgar 'on his legs again,' as he phrased it; and Blanche shared Lionel's desire, for she was strongly possessed by the womanly weakness of liking for the man who would have loved her best.

He had taken the tidings of his brother's engagement in a far better spirit than they had dared to hope he would have done. Beatrice had been deputed to tell him about it; and Beatrice had done her duty well. That is to say, she had told him quietly, and she had never seemed to see how pale he got, and then how flushed, and how his hands went up and covered his face for one moment of abandonment as he listened.

When they all met in the evening, just before dinner, there was no parade of the fact that might be painful to him made. Blanche was speaking to Frank, who was as buoyantly happy on the occasion as it became Frank to be; and Lionel was reading a notice of an exhibition at Manchester, to which he had sent several of his pictures.

'*Place aux dames*,' Edgar said, going up to Blanche; 'my heartiest wishes for your happiness; but I was astonished.'

'So was I,' she said, laughing and blushing a little. And then Edgar turned to his brother, and gripped Lionel's hand; and the congratulations that would be the hardest to offer were over.

A great many people were good enough to declare it to be an 'ill-advised match;' for Miss Lyon had the reputation, amongst the broad-minded denizens of the neighbouring nooks and corners, of being 'fast,' because she was fascinating; and extravagant, because she regarded beauty, and would have it upon and about her if she could. Naturally, their list of acquaintances was a small one, and they did not mark one 'intimate friend' upon it. But when the few who knew them down here came, curiosity developed intimacy in a manner that was most marvellous—the battery of inquiry being chiefly directed against the mother, who was willing to tell everything she knew, if only it would have appeased them.

'Rather a rash thing for Miss Lyon to do, is it not?' one asked. And when Mrs. Lyon, with a ghastly vision of Lionel's having a first wife in the background, and being by-and-by transported for bigamy (else

why would it be rash for Blanche to marry him?) asked, affrightedly, 'Why?' the lady went on—

'Oh! unless he can maintain her, of course: if he can, as she has been accustomed to be maintained; but he must have more than anybody supposes if he can.'

'Five hundred a-year won't keep them, as she will want to live,' another judicious friend observed; and when Mrs. Lyon repeated this prophecy to Blanche, the latter replied, brightly—

'We shall raise that between us easily enough, mamma, you can tell any inquiring friends.'

'Between you?' Mrs. Lyon cried, in horror-stricken accents; 'you're not going to disgrace yourself by going out as governess again, especially when you're married?'

'Never fear that, mamma; I shall never try to combine such conflicting elements again, believe me.' Then she got up, rather nervously, and added, 'I have a greater surprise for you than the announcement of my marriage. I have made my mark in a way that all who love me may be proud of. I have written a book that has put me on a platform where a queen might be proud to stand; and now I am going on to write in my own name, and to take all the honours that come to me to myself as my very own, to myself.'

Mrs. Lyon did not understand her daughter's elation; only an artist can sympathize with one; but she was rejoiced to hear that the occupation into which her daughter had thrown herself with all the bright *verve* and vigour characteristic of her, was so glorious a one. And then Blanche, whose head was just a little turned by this success of hers, brought together a lot of reviews, and read them aloud, and believed in them, tyro that she was, when they flattered her for her skill in psychology, and prognosticated her rapid rise.

Her art life, her inner life, her other life; it would have been a mine of wealth to her even if her heart-life had been dull and void. As it was it was such a fitting accompaniment to the brilliant strain love made of life. The girl was

almost too happy. Both as woman and artist she was being so well dealt with by fate. 'And it will be dearer to me; it will come home nearer to me, when I get it in my own name, Lal,' she said to her lover: 'to read sweet phrases of oneself as the "author of so-and-so," is sweet; but it will be sweeter now that I have made up my mind to write under my own name; and it will be sweeter still,' she added, 'when it will be as your wife that I win whatever I may win.'

'We had better live in town, that you may have the advantage of literary associates,' he said.

'Yes, just long enough for me to get to know some of the stars in the literary heaven; then we'll come and settle here in some place near to Frank and Trixy (for that will be, Lal).'

'Won't you find that dull?'

'No; surely any one who cares for our society might come to us in the autumn; there are just three or four, Lal, whom I began corresponding with as strangers, when I commenced writing, that I should like to know more of when I am settled down here.'

'A little of the Bohemian element down here will be like water in a dry

land,' Lionel said, laughing; 'how will it ever arrive to you to entertain and be entertained in a country clique, Blanche? You're wishing more than you wot of, child,' he added, seriously, 'in proposing that this should be your permanent home.'

'When I suffer "more than well 'twould suit philosophy to tell" we can go off for a breath of more invigorating mental air; and, after all, Lal, in any place we can live for each other and ourselves; we need never be bored: whoever is wisest and brightest in this country-side is sure to be drawn towards the sole representative of current literature; and it's the mistress of a house makes the society of it, remember. My house can never be dull.'

'People may say it is not decorous if you make it too pleasant,' Lionel said, smiling.

'Then they will be stupid, and against stupidity even the gods fight in vain, as you know. I am not afraid of any one whose thoughts are worth my thinking about considering me aught but decorous; are you, Lal?'

'No,' he said, 'my darling; you are all that a woman should be, and that a man can want.'

SPECIMENS OF FOREIGN NOVELISTS.

George Sand.

MONSIEUR ROUSSET'S GHOST.

▲ FRAGMENT OF AN UNPUBLISHED ROMANCE.

'YOU laugh at ghosts,' said M. Guigne, gravely; 'and you laugh the louder because I don't laugh at all. My good friends, I was once like you, incredulous and sceptical; but an adventure which happened to me in my youth made so strong an impression on my mind, that it pains me whenever I hear people treating so serious a subject lightly.'

M. Guigne was at first unwilling to enter into any further explanation; but after a considerable

amount of entreaty, he edified us with the following narrative:

'It was in the year 1730; I was then twenty years of age, and a tolerably-good-looking young fellow, although there are but slight remains of it now. I had not at that time a bald head, a big nose, small watery eyes, and shrunken cheeks. I had a fresh colour, a quick eye, a small waist, and an admirable leg, as you may still perceive. In short, I was a handsome lad, not in the least timid, accustomed to fall in

He had taken the tidings of his brother's engagement in a far better spirit than they had dared to hope he would have done. Beatrice had been deputed to tell him about it; and Beatrice had done her duty well. That is to say, she had told him quietly, and she had never seemed to see how pale he got, and then how flushed, and how his hands went up and covered his face for one moment of abandonment as he listened.

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'So was I,' she said, laughing and blushing a little. And then Edgar turned to his brother, and gripped Lionel's hand; and the congratulations that would be the hardest to offer were over.

A great many people were good enough to declare it to be an 'ill-advised match;' for Miss Lyon had the reputation, amongst the broad-minded denizens of the neighbouring nooks and corners, of being 'fast,' because she was fascinating; and extravagant, because she regarded beauty, and would have it upon and about her if she could. Naturally, their list of acquaintances was a small one, and they did not mark one 'intimate friend' upon it. But when the few who knew them down here came, curiosity developed intimacy in a manner that was most marvellous—the battery of inquiry being chiefly directed against the mother, who was willing to tell everything she knew, if only it would have appeased them.

'Rather a rash thing for Miss Lyon to do, is it not?' one asked. And when Mrs. Lyon, with a ghastly vision of Lionel's having a first wife in the background, and being by-and-by transported for bigamy (else

why would it be rash for Blanche to marry him?) asked, affrightedly, 'Why?' the lady went on—

'Oh! unless he can maintain her, of course: if he can, as she has been accustomed to be maintained; but he must have more than anybody supposes if he can.'

'Five hundred a-year won't keep them, as she will want to live,' another judicious friend observed; and when Mrs. Lyon repeated this prophecy to Blanche, the latter replied, brightly—

'We shall raise that between us easily enough, mamma, you can tell any inquiring friends.'

'Between you?' Mrs. Lyon cried, in horror-stricken accents; 'you're not going to disgrace yourself by going out as governess again, especially when you're married?'

'Never fear that, mamma; I shall never try to combine such conflicting elements again, believe me.' Then she got up, rather nervously, and added, 'I have a greater surprise for you than the announcement of my marriage. I have made my mark in a way that all who love me may be proud of. I have written a book that has put me on a platform where a queen might be proud to stand; and now I am going on to write in my own name, and to take all the honours that come to me to myself as my very own, to myself.'

Mrs. Lyon did not understand her daughter's elation; only an artist can sympathize with one; but she was rejoiced to hear that the occupation into which her daughter had thrown herself with all the bright *verve* and vigour characteristic of her, was so glorious a one. And then Blanche, whose head was just a little turned by this success of hers, brought together a lot of reviews, and read them aloud, and believed in them, tyro that she was, when they flattered her for her skill in psychology, and prognosticated her rapid rise.

Her art life, her inner life, her other life; it would have been a mine of wealth to her even if her heart-life had been dull and void. As it was it was such a fitting accompaniment to the brilliant strain love made of life. The girl was

almost too happy. Both as woman and artist she was being so well dealt with by fate. 'And it will be dearer to me; it will come home nearer to me, when I get it in my own name, Lal,' she said to her lover: 'to read sweet phrases of oneself as the "author of so-and-so," is sweet; but it will be sweeter now that I have made up my mind to write under my own name; and it will be sweeter still,' she added, 'when it will be as your wife that I win whatever I may win.'

'We had better live in town, that you may have the advantage of literary associates,' he said.

'Yes, just long enough for me to get to know some of the stars in the literary heaven; then we'll come and settle here in some place near to Frank and Trixy (for that will be, Lal).'

'Won't you find that dull?'

'No; surely any one who cares for our society might come to us in the autumn; there are just three or four, Lal, whom I began corresponding with as strangers, when I commenced writing, that I should like to know more of when I am settled down here.'

'A little of the Bohemian element down here will be like water in a dry

land,' Lionel said, laughing; 'how will it ever arrive to you to entertain and be entertained in a country clique, Blanche? You're wishing more than you wot of, child,' he added, seriously, 'in proposing that this should be your permanent home.'

'When I suffer "more than well 'twould suit philosophy to tell" we can go off for a breath of more invigorating mental air; and, after all, Lal, in any place we can live for each other and ourselves; we need never be bored; whoever is wisest and brightest in this country-side is sure to be drawn towards the sole representative of current literature; and it's the mistress of a house makes the society of it, remember. My house can never be dull.'

'People may say it is not decorous if you make it too pleasant,' Lionel said, smiling.

'Then they will be stupid, and against stupidity even the gods fight in vain, as you know. I am not afraid of any one whose thoughts are worth my thinking about considering me aught but decorous; are you, Lal?'

'No,' he said, 'my darling; you are all that a woman should be, and that a man can want.'

SPECIMENS OF FOREIGN NOVELISTS.

George Sand.

MONSIEUR ROUSSET'S GHOST.

A FRAGMENT OF AN UNPUBLISHED ROMANCE.

'YOU laugh at ghosts,' said M. Guigne, gravely; 'and you laugh the louder because I don't laugh at all. My good friends, I was once like you, incredulous and sceptical; but an adventure which happened to me in my youth made so strong an impression on my mind, that it pains me whenever I hear people treating so serious a subject lightly.'

M. Guigne was at first unwilling to enter into any further explanation; but after a considerable

amount of entreaty, he edified us with the following narrative:

'It was in the year 1730; I was then twenty years of age, and a tolerably-good-looking young fellow, although there are but slight remains of it now. I had not at that time a bald head, a big nose, small watery eyes, and shrunken cheeks. I had a fresh colour, a quick eye, a small waist, and an admirable leg, as you may still perceive. In short, I was a handsome lad, not in the least timid, accustomed to fall in

with the style of manners of the people that happened to fall in my way. I made madrigals with handsome ladies, swore with soldiers, and reasoned as well as I could with philosophers. Indeed, I was a general favourite; and my combined profession of actor and author was a passport both to good and to bad society.

"I was travelling to Lyons by the diligence, to join the provincial company to which I belonged. It was the close of autumn; the weather cold and foggy. My companion in the coach was a certain Baron de Guernay, who had come this way on business matters, and was returning to sleep at his own château close by. He was a great talker, a great questioner, and a great amateur of verses and romances. My conversation pleased him; and he was no sooner informed of my profession than he expressed a wish not to part with me immediately. He was one of those diletanti who have always in their pocket some little dramatic attempt or other, which they hope you will pronounce to be admirable. They will then make you a present of it, in order to see it performed without having to unloose their purse-strings. I was not to be caught so easily; but I accepted his offer to pass the night at his house. It promised a better supper than I should find at the inn where the diligence stopped, and where I should be compelled to remain twelve or fifteen hours before I could start again.

"We therefore drew up at the end of the avenue which led from the high-road to the château. A couple of servants in half-livery were waiting to carry monsieur's portfolio and cane. They took my trunk, and we walked towards what really looked a handsome old building when gilded by the rays of the setting sun.

"*"Parbleu!"* said the Baron, as we proceeded up the avenue, "the Baronne will be considerably astonished to see me arrive in company with a stranger."

"And perhaps even more annoyed than surprised," I added,

"when she knows that the stranger is a comedian."

"No," he answered; "my wife is not prejudiced. She is a person of talent, as you will see. She is a true Parisienne—a little too much so, for she cannot bear the country. She has only been here three days, and she declares I want to bury her alive. She will be delighted to have an agreeable guest to supper. And if you are not too fatigued to give us a few short recitations afterwards, or to read my little piece, as I have no doubt you will read it, admirably, I am certain——"

"Seeing that I should have to pay my scot, I yielded with the best grace possible, and promised the Baron to read and recite whatever he chose to ask me to.

"You are an obliging fellow," he exclaimed; "and I am already so pleased with you that I am contriving how to make you miss the coach to-morrow, and keep you here eight-and-forty-hours."

"Assuredly," I said, "the offer would be very tempting, if——"

"No ifs," he interrupted. "You will find the château a pleasant residence, and in quite as good order as if it had always been inhabited; in spite of which, I have not been there for the last three years, except in passing. During all the time we have been married, Madame la Baronne has never once deigned to come and see whether the place is a mansion or a pigeon-house; I had the greatest difficulty to persuade her to spend a month here now—for it will take me a good month to install my new steward, and make him acquainted with the affairs of the estate. Now, you understand, my dear,—but, your name?"

"Rosidor, monsieur," I answered. That was the theatrical title I then assumed.

"Yes, yes; Rosidor," he continued. "You told me so before, and I beg your pardon. Well, you understand, my dear Rosidor, that it is impossible I should leave a young wife like mine for a whole month all alone in Paris, especially as she has lately lost her aunt, who used to act as her chaperon."

"You would not have me suppose," I answered, with a smile, "that you have the Gothic misfortune of being jealous?"

"Jealous, no; only prudent. One ought always to keep one's eyes a little open: none but idiots are utterly blind."

"Monsieur le Baron sometimes talked like a sensible man; but he did not always act with equal discretion. So true is it that saying is one thing, and doing another."

"He preceded me a few minutes into the house, in order to announce my arrival to his wife. On learning that a gentleman was coming to supper, she rang for her maid to smarten up her dress; and then, when she was told the guest was an actor, she sent her away, thinking that an actor was no more of a gentleman than a husband was; and finally, when I was introduced, and she saw my youthful countenance, it occurred to her that, after all, I might be a bit of a gentleman, so she left the room for just a moment. When she returned, I observed that she had an additional sprinkling of powder, and wore one or two ribbons more."

"The Baronne de Guernay was piquant rather than pretty, and coquettish rather than intellectual; but at twenty one does not criticise severely. I thought her charming, and was not long in making her comprehend that I thought so. She, on her part, gave me to understand that she was not offended at my opinion, but that she only considered me in the light of an artist—at least not till the close of the supper."

"There then took place between her and her husband one of those domestic altercations which would never have occurred in the presence of a stranger of higher rank than myself; but which convinced me, in spite of my vanity, that I was looked upon as a person of no consequence. So I resolved to make myself a little more important, at least in the eyes of the Baronne. I was simple enough to believe that a flirtation with a woman of quality could possibly change the state of the question. However, I took little interest in the subject of their quarrel. Only,

I ought to direct your attention to one particular, which is the turning-point of my narrative."

"The discussion between the husband and wife was about two stewards, one of whom had died before madame's arrival, while the other, who was to take the place of the defunct, seemed in no hurry to present himself. As madame was already tired of the country, and wished she could leave monsieur there by himself, she declared that the late steward, Monsieur Rousset, had been a fool to die just at the time when the fashionable world repairs to Paris. She declared the new steward, M. Buisson, to be another fool, to keep them waiting; and she gave M. le Baron to understand that she thought him fool the third, for having hurried himself, and hurried her, to meet a man of business whose duty it was to wait, instead of keeping them waiting."

"In the first place, my dear," the Baron said, in excuse, "poor Rousset put off dying as long as he could. He was eighty-two. He maintained my affairs and my house in admirable order during the thirty or forty years he managed the property. He was a valuable man, and I cannot help regretting him. You see how well he has kept up the house, and in what excellent condition everything is left."

"That makes no difference to me; I did not know him, and cannot share your regret. Moreover, Baron, you exaggerate the state of the case. My maid, who has talked with the servants here, tells me the old man was a perfect miser, and had been childish, too, for some time past."

"His faculties might be a little affected by age, but there is no evidence of it in my affairs. As to his economical habits, I do not see how I can complain of them, since they all turned out to my advantage."

"We will say no more about Rousset; he is dead: but I will hear of no excuse for your Buisson, who is alive. I know no more of one than I do of the other; but I am very angry with him for his impertinence in not being here. Nobody but yourself would engage with

people who seem as if they wanted you to go down on your knees and beg them to come and live with you. A pretty sort of steward, to keep you shilly-shallying here, unable to begin anything, and consequently to finish anything! In short, my dear, I tell you plainly that if your Buisson is not here to-morrow, I shall take myself off and leave you to remain or to follow, as you please."

"Have a little patience, my darling, or you will drive me mad! Buisson will be here to-morrow morning, perhaps this very evening. Good heavens! A man of business is not a footman; and, till he has entered upon his functions, I have no right to order him about."

"You ought to have told him either to accept the situation or decline it."

"I took care to do nothing of the kind. He is much too highly recommended for that. Why, he is as valuable in his way as poor Rousset was."

"If he is not, like him, insane; for I begin to believe you have made a vow to choose your stewards out of a lunatic asylum."

"The Baron shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and as he rose from table said to a servant, "Pierre, tell the porter at the lodge not to go to bed till midnight. M. Buisson travels on horseback, and may perhaps arrive late."

"I will attend to it, Monsieur le Baron," Pierre replied. "The late Monsieur Rousset's suite of rooms is ready prepared to receive M. Buisson."

"Thereupon we went to the saloon, and Buisson and Rousset were alike forgotten. Madame was so good as to remember that I was present, and requested me to recite some verses. I offered to read the Baron's dramatic essay, but Madame said she had heard it half a dozen times, and that she preferred something from Corneille or Racine. To punish her for these little airs I obstinately sided with the Baron. We were obliged to come to a compromise. It was agreed that I should read the Baron's choicest passages—and choice they were! After which I was free to select for myself.

"I had remarked that the Baron was extremely fatigued, and that it was as much as the affection he bore his own work could do to keep him awake to the end of it. I succeeded in making him nod by reciting in a monotonous tone the heavy tirades of our older authors. Madame was gaping; she thought me cold. My mode of delivery and my choice of passages made her suspect me to be neither a good actor nor a man of taste. She then began teasing her husband for being so sleepy. He did not take her jokes good-naturedly, but went to bed, leaving us with a sort of humble companion who was sewing at the farther end of the room, and who very soon made her disappearance. Whether she also felt drowsy at the sound of my voice, or whether she had received from one party the order to remain with madame and from the other *not* to remain as soon as monsieur had turned his back, I have never been able to make up my mind.

"At last I was alone with the little Baronne, and she seemed to consent to the position only for want of better amusement. I instantly adopted a complete alteration of countenance, attitude, voice, and subject. From the dullness of a heavy provincial player I changed to the actor—whom you know—which I had already become in reality. I cast aside Agamemnon and Augustus and went heart and soul into scenes of youth and passion.

"I then inquired whether she understood Italian, and at her request improvised a scene in that language. My fair young hostess was already moved; her blue eyes sparkled and her hand was hot. When she asked how it was that, in these Italian sketches, the dialogue came so readily, I answered that that depended more on the actors who gave the cue than on the subject of the piece itself, and that certain persons rendered us eloquent by their looks and by the inspiration which they communicated.

"For instance," I said, "in a love scene, you may have to express the sentiment which the lady who is acting with you really inspires.



H. Harval sc

Drawn by J. Abbott Pasquier.]

MONSIEUR ROUSSET'S GHOST.

[See the Story.

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N.

Such occasions often occur; and I am certain there are scenes in which I should be sublime, if I only had before my eyes an object equally attractive with the imaginary being who is the object of my dramatic address."

"I should much like to see and hear you," she said, scarcely daring to express the wish, "in one of those moments of inspiration."

"It only depends upon yourself, madame."

"How so?" she asked, with artistic innocence.

"It will be necessary for you to lend yourself for a moment to a theatrical hypothesis. Thus: I am Valère, in love with Célianthé. I complain of her cruelty in a monologue. Deign to pay attention, and I will make an attempt. I shall probably be a little cold and awkward at first; but you will have the goodness to rise and stand behind me, as if you were discovering the secret of my passion. I shall see you in the glass, and your looks will encourage me. In my part, however, I am supposed *not* to see you, and I shall have so little hope that I shall draw my sword to kill myself. You will snatch it from me, with the words "I love you!"

"Really, shall I have to say that?"

"Yes, madame, and it is not difficult to remember. But you must be so good as to say it with sufficient earnestness to produce upon me a certain amount of illusion. Then I shall throw myself at your feet and express my gratitude. I am sure I shall find the most passionate expressions, and that my acting will approach so near to nature that you yourself will be deceived by it."

"Really! I am curious to witness that; and I will try and perform my part in the dialogue. Let us begin at once; I am standing behind you and looking at you."

"Oh! madame, not in that cold way! You must act more earnestly; you must throw a little warmth into your pantomime!"

"But not till after you have spoken. I cannot know that you are in love with me until you have told me so."

"O Julia!" I exclaimed—I had heard the Baron call her by that name, which *was* hers in reality. And thereupon I spouted a long rigmorole for several minutes. At last I pretended to stab myself, and my princess hindered me with the cry "I love you!" pronounced with a great deal more fire than I expected. I complained, nevertheless, of the coldness of her tone, and made her begin again several times—when I perceived that the interest of our little drama had prevented our observing that we were no longer alone!

'With a sudden effort I immediately assumed a calm and indifferent expression of countenance. The Baronne, turning round to ascertain the cause, uttered a scream of terror at the sight. We were thunderstruck on observing that the intruder was neither her husband, nor her duenna, nor any other person belonging to the house by whom we might expect to be interrupted, but a perfect stranger to the lady as well as to myself.

'It was a little old man, very yellow and shrunken, neat in his appearance though rather threadbare. He wore an olive-green coat and waistcoat edged with tarnished silver lace, speckled stockings, a very old-fashioned peruke, spectacles, and a tall ebony walking-stick with a top representing a negro's head surmounted by a large cornelian carved into the shape of a turban. An ugly black cur dog stood between his legs—for he had already sat down in the chimney corner—and he appeared so busied in warming himself as to have paid no attention to the private theatricals which he must have witnessed.

'The Baronne recovered herself sooner than I did, and, addressing him with a mixture of embarrassment and hauteur, asked him who he was and what he wanted. But he seemed as if he did not hear her. He was either deaf or pretended to be so, and began talking to himself as if going on with a conversation already commenced.

"Yes, yes," he said, in a short, dry, and feeble voice; "it is cold, cold, very cold to-night." (The

hands of the clock pointed to twelve.) "It will freeze; it freezes now; I am frozen myself. The ground is so hard I could scarcely stir it; and the moon is bright, very bright, too bright."

"What have we here?" said the Baronne, turning to me in astonishment. "A deaf person, or a madman? How did he contrive to enter?"

"I was as much surprised as she was. I questioned the little old man in turn, but he made no more reply to me than to her."

"If you want to know about M. le Baron's affairs," he went on, "they are order, in good order, in first-rate order. M. le Baron will be satisfied. The only thing which can possibly give trouble is the lawsuit with the prior of St. Benedict's; but in my hands it is nothing, a mere nothing, nothing at all."

"Ah, I have it!" said the Baronne. "It is the new steward, M. Buisson. He has arrived at last, which is fortunate; but he is as deaf as a post. *Isn't he deaf?*"

"Monsieur," I said, raising my voice, "don't you hear that Madame la Baronne asks you whether you have had a pleasant journey?"

"The stranger never answered a word, but began caressing his ugly dog."

"What a horrible creature!" said the lady; "he will be a pleasant addition to our family circle. How stupid of the Baron to engage such a creature!"

"I must acknowledge," I answered, "that this seems a strange person to take for a steward. I don't know how the Baron is to talk to him about business. He would not hear a gun fired off at his ear."

"And he cannot be less than a hundred years old! I suppose my husband fancied the last was too young. Those are the ideas he takes into his head, and which would occur to nobody else but himself. Let us try, however, and send him off to bed. Monsieur! Monsieur Buisson!"

"The Baronne shouted with all her might; in vain. When she found the old man did not take the slightest notice of her, she treated

the matter as a joke and burst into a laugh. I tried to do the same, but could not manage it. The cursed old fellow had spoilt my game at the very moment it was going on so prosperously. He did not appear to have the least suspicion that his presence was extremely inconvenient. He did not attempt to stir from his chair, but warmed his withered legs with an insane sort of earnestness; and his abominable dog (on whose tail I tried to tread) showed his teeth with a threatening grin."

"The lawsuit," said the steward, "is certainly involved, really involved, very involved. No one but myself understands its bearings; I defy any one else to finish it. The prior declares that—"

"Here he began to talk with astonishing volubility and with a degree of animation that was altogether strange. Do not expect me to report the drift of his discourse; for none but the devil himself, or an old special pleader, could understand a syllable of it. It was Hebrew to me, and still more so to the lady. Moreover, as he went on talking, I experienced a very singular phenomenon—and so did she, as she told me afterwards. What he said reached our ears but did not leave the least trace on our memory. It would have been impossible for either of us to repeat a single phrase he uttered, nor could we make the least sense of it. We remarked that even he himself did not appear to hear and understand what he was saying. He talked as if addressing empty space, and it seemed to us that he sometimes passed from one subject to another, without rhyme or reason, and that sometimes he repeated the same thing over, and over, and over again."

"But we had really no actual cognizance of his words. The sound of his voice lulled our ears, but did not satisfy or fill them. The apartment seemed muffled and soundless, as if we were close shut up in a box. His face and appearance had greatly changed, and continued to change as he went on talking. He seemed every minute to grow older and older. I do not know what people

look like when they are two hundred years old—although we are told on medical authority that it is possible to live two hundred years,* but it is certain that at first he appeared to be a hundred, and that afterwards his age seemed double and triple. His skin stuck close to his bones. His eyes, which for an instant were brilliant and inflamed, as it were, by the excitement of chicanery, became haggard, unsteady, and afterwards glassy, dull, and fixed, till they were finally extinguished in their orbits. His voice also sounded gradually weaker and weaker, and his features contracted. His coat hung loose and flabby about him, and then stuck, as if it were wet about his lean and hectic limbs. His linen, which at first was white, little by little assumed an earthy hue, and we fancied that his person exhaled a mouldy smell. His dog stood up and began to howl, in answer to the wind which was roaring out of doors. The wax-lights in the chandeliers went out one by one without our paying any attention to them, until the very last, dying away, left us completely in the dark. The Baronne gave a scream and rang the bell. No one came to answer it; but I succeeded in finding an unburnt candle in another chandelier, and managed to light it. We then found that we were left alone. The strange old man had taken his departure with as little noise as he had effected his entrance.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the Baronne. "I don't know what is the matter with me, but I have been very near having a nervous attack. I never knew anything more vexatious than that little spectre there—for he was absolutely like a spectre, was he not? Can you conceive my husband's taking such an unearthly mummy? Dead, a hundred years old, and insane—for he is insane—into the bargain! What was the purport of all his muttering? I could understand nothing; I could not catch a single word. It sounded exactly like an

old worn-out rattle. He made me laugh at first; but I soon got tired of him, then angry, then alarmed, and that to such a degree that I was choked and oppressed. I felt an inclination to yawn, to cough, to weep, and to scream—I believe that I did scream a little at last. I am so dreadfully afraid of lunatics and idiots! I would not for the world have that man remain here four-and-twenty hours longer; I am sure I should soon go mad myself."

"The Baron must have been deceived about his age and capabilities," I answered. "He is certainly in his second childhood."

"He will deny the fact. He will make him out to be young and agreeable; but he shall discharge him at once, or else I will leave. Good heavens!" she exclaimed, abruptly, "do you know what o'clock it is?"

"I looked at the timepiece. It was three in the morning. I could not believe my eyes. I looked at my watch, and it was three in the morning. "Can it be possible," I said, "that this old fellow has been talking gibberish to us for three whole hours?"

"We kept silence for an instant, quite unable to explain to each other how we had borne that tiresome chattering for three whole hours without the power of escaping from it and without being aware of the lapse of time. Suddenly the Baronne began to be cross with me. "I cannot conceive," she said, "why you did not interrupt him—why you did not find some means, no matter whether polite or not, of delivering me from such a state of torture. It was your place to do it."

"It seems to me, madame," I answered, quietly, "that I had no right to give orders in your house; at least not without your commissioning me to do so."

"I have a great idea that I was fast asleep, and in all probability so were you."

"I assure you I was not, for my sufferings were horrible."

"And mine also," she replied; "I was terrified and paralysed. I have told you I am afraid of idiots

* See *De la Longévité Humaine*, by P. Flureau, Member of the Académie Française, and Perpetual Secretary of the Institut of France.

and lunatics. But were you frightened as well as myself?"

"I think not; but I was seized with an indescribable stupor, a sort of sick feeling—"

"Nonsense!" she said, in a tone of disdain. "You were frightened as well as I. In truth we have kept a pretty night-watch! I shall have a headache to-morrow. So please look about the house—in the kitchen, the pantry, or anywhere else—to see if there is still any one up. I may break all the bells, and not a soul will come."

"It was a very easy request to make. There was only one single candle in the room. I could not decently walk off with that; and I had not the slightest acquaintance with the house. I left the room, however, at a venture, stumbling about in the antechamber and the corridors as I went along. I called; I knocked at several doors. "If I should wake the Baron," I thought, "he will consider it strange not to be in bed at three in the morning. They must settle the matter between them; it is nothing to me."

"At last, pushing open an unfashioned door, I found myself in a spacious kitchen dimly lighted by an old oil lamp. There again I found the little old man dozing on a straw-bottomed chair by the side of a half-extinguished fire. His dog snarled at me. The poor wretch seemed passing so miserable a night, that I could not help pitying him. I went to wake him up, but he began to mutter "It is cold, very cold, very cold indeed." It was impossible to make him understand a word, and equally impossible to find a living soul to speak to. I lighted a candle, and rambled through the house from top to bottom. Not a man-servant nor a maid was there; none of them slept in that part of the building. I returned to the saloon, to rejoin madame; but she, out of patience, had gone to bed and taken the candle away with her. The wretched light which I had went out, and how was I then to find my chamber? I gave up all thoughts of doing so. I threw large logs on the fire, drew a sofa in front

of it, wrapped myself in a table-cloth, and soon fell fast asleep.

"Servants, however soon they go to bed at night, do not rise a minute earlier in the morning. After day-break I had plenty of time to find my chamber, which I knew by my trunk being placed at the door. I tumbled the bed as if I had slept in it. No one was aware of my bivouac in the saloon. When the bell summoned me to breakfast, I found the Baron and his wife at open war. He was rejoicing at M. Buisson's arrival, and had ordered a servant to request him to come and be presented. At this the lady was furious, declaring she would turn him out if he entered her presence.

"What can be the matter with you, my dear?" exclaimed the Baron, losing patience. "How can you talk such nonsense as to say that M. Buisson is a hundred years old, idiotic, and deaf? You have not even seen him yet."

"I have only seen too much of him; all the while from midnight to three o'clock this morning."

"You must have dreamt. He has hardly been here a couple of hours."

"I tell you he arrived at midnight. Ask Pierre; he must have let him in."

"But when I tell you that I brought him to the house myself, at nine o'clock this morning, and that I went more than a league to meet him, what will you say to that?"

"That you are dreaming."

"No; 'tis you."

"Where is Pierre, to give us an explanation? And you, Monsieur Rosidor, why don't you speak?"

"I was bewildered, and had only a confused recollection of the events of the previous night. I could not, and I dared not, remember anything, or explain anything. The door opened, and M. Buisson appeared. He was forty years of age, at the very most, stout, with a fresh colour, dressed in black, with a quick eye and an open countenance. The Baron presented him to his wife. He was no more deaf than you or I. He expressed himself well, answered to the purpose, said nothing about law matters, and assured madame that he slept at St. Meinen, starting

thence at five in the morning in order that he might arrive by nine.

"This explanation answered very little purpose, for there was no confounding this steward with the one who came in during the night. The Baronne interrogated Pierre. Pierre had seen nobody arrive. He had waited at the end of the avenue till midnight for M. Buisson, who did not come; he then went to bed. None of the servants saw any one enter. They all slept perfectly well. Madame's maid waited for her in her room, to which she returned soon after three in the morning.

"Three in the morning!" shouted the Baron, darting a terrible look at me. "Really, it was a singular fancy to sit up till so late an hour as that! But you see that my steward, who you say favoured you with his company, is not quite so old as you suppose him to be."

"The Baronne fell into a violent passion. "But speak, monsieur," she said, addressing me. "I am taken for a romancing visionary, and you sit there without saying a word!"

"My ideas at last began to clear a little, and I said, "Monsieur le Baron, I assure you upon my honour that at midnight, just as I was about to take leave of madame, there came into the saloon a little man who cannot be less than eighty years of age, and who amused himself talking at random until exactly three in the morning. We could not get him to answer a word, to such a degree is he absent and deaf."

"The Baron was struck with the accent of truth with which I gave this explanation. "What sort of person was this little man?" he asked.

"He was thin, and not so tall as I am. He had a sharp nose, a large wart under his eye, thin lips, pale and haggard eyes, and a dry and hollow voice."

"How was he dressed?"

"Olive-green coat, waistcoat, and breeches; blue and white speckled stockings. He had an ebony walking-stick, carved at the top with a negro's head, with a cornelian turban. He was accompanied by an ugly terrier, which was black all over and very snappish."

"Perfectly correct," said the

Baronne. "Monsieur forgets to add that his coat was laced with silver, and that he wore tortoiseshell spectacles. Moreover, he had a habit of repeating the same word three times over."

"At that moment Pierre, who was handing a plate, let it fall, and turned as pale as death. The Baron also changed colour a little, and said, "It is very strange! They told me of it before, but I would not believe it."

"I saw him," said Pierre, trembling from head to foot, "the evening of our arrival as plainly as I now see you, and dressed exactly as he is in his picture."

"Fetch his portrait instantly."

"A small drawing, in coloured crayons, was brought."

"It is not well done," said the Baron. "It was executed by a travelling artist; but the likeness is frightfully correct."

"The Baronne cast her eyes on the portrait, gave a loud scream, and fainted. I could no longer command my feelings. When I recognized, beyond the possibility of doubt, *who* had been our visitor the previous night, I felt a cold sweat creep over my limbs."

"As soon as the Baronne came to herself, she asked, "How long has Monsieur Rousset been dead?"

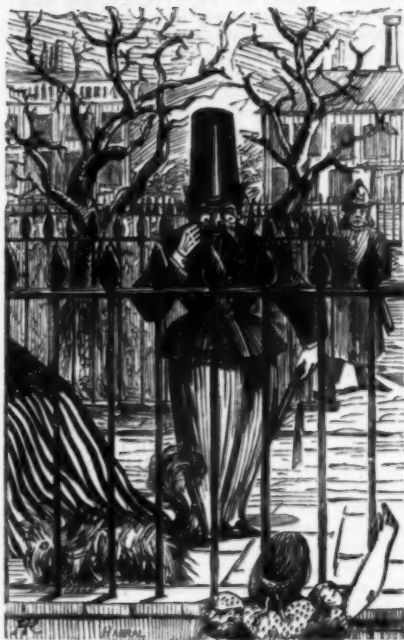
"Alas, poor man!" said Pierre, "he was buried more than a week before madame's arrival. I closed his eyes myself: and, if madame wishes to see his dog, his old black terrier, who goes every night and scratches at his grave——"

"Never, never!" screamed the lady. "Quick! Pack up my things, and order post-horses. I will not pass another night in the house!"

"Whether she really was terrified, or availed herself of the pretext to get away, she insisted so effectually that in a couple of hours she and the Baron were on their way to Paris, leaving the new steward to settle matters with the old one as well as he could. The lady bade me a cold adieu; the Baron tried to be more amiable, and had me driven to the nearest town: but I could not share in the regret which he expressed at our abrupt departure from the Château de Guernay."

UPSTAIRS AND DOWN.

BY JACK EASEL.



north, south, east, or west—his observant eye will rest on an interminable row of cast-iron spikes. The fact in itself is not a pleasant one to contemplate; and when Mosscoo finds out that, behind these grim emblems of war, cellars are dug to a depth of some ten or twelve feet from the pavement level, in which cellars at least half the inhabitants of every house pass the greater part of their time, can't you imagine how he shrugs his shoulders, and opens his eyes with astonishment? But is it true, then, of these English, that they burrow in the ground for habitation, and condemn their domestics to reside in those *oubliettes* there? Parbleu! what a fate! Yes; it is even so; and Mosscoo knows very well that honest Jules, who brushes his clothes at home, or Babot, who, with nothing on her head but a snow-white cap, frilled to a nicety, takes his children out for a walk in the Champs Elysées—either of these good creatures, I say, would grumble roundly, even if they didn't altogether pine away under such an infliction. Whereas Sairey-Jane, who comes up from her father's cottage on Dartmoor, with a pair of rosy cheeks and a strong Devonshire accent, accommodates herself kindly to her new situation—say that of deputy sub-assistant under scullery-maid, at eight pounds a year and her beer; gives up the green turf and purple heather of her native soil, for the prospect of a dull brick wall and coal-cellar door, only enlivened by the hasty glimpses which she gets of the lower halves of passing crinolines, and of peripatetic boots and trousers, worn by people who, from the knee upwards, are invisi-

ble. If I were asked what leading feature of our domestic economy would be most likely to attract the attention of an intelligent foreigner, on his first visit to the metropolis, I should unhesitatingly answer—area railings. We sons and daughters of perfidious Albion (or of Merry England, if you like it better), can hardly realize to ourselves the sense of extreme novelty which Mosscoo must experience at finding himself in a city where he is condemned to walk or drive through endless groves of iron. Turn in what direction he will through habitable London, whether within the dingy, but eminently fashionable purlieus of Mayfair, the spick-and-span new district of Tyburnia, Belgravia the aristocratic, Bloomsbury the respectable, Barnsbury the genteel, Clapham, Peckham, Fulham, Brompton, Hoxton, Brixton, Islington, Kensington, Kennington, —

ble to her. This is Sairey-Jane's fate, and that of master Tom, the page, who perhaps had the run of an orchard before he bloomed into buttons; though, to be sure, he does answer the front-door bell sometimes, and even goes out for an airing exactly three paces behind his 'missus,' which is so far an advantage to him.

I wonder how many of the upper ten thousand—those who live at the top, instead of the bottom of the kitchen-stairs—try to realize the effect of this semi-subterranean existence; and which of us who are placed in authority over servants; who say to one 'do this,' and he doeth it (or doesn't do it, as the case may be)—which of us has explored, even in imagination, those gloomy labyrinths of the basement story? We are separated by, say twelve inches of floor carpentry, from a little world of beings possessed of the same physical and moral sense as ourselves; with desires, hopes, fears, and digestions like our own, and we take no more count of these last than we do of the works of a watch. The use of a watch is to tell us the time; but as for the mainspring, the lever action, the double escapement, the wheels and chain, or what you will, inside, do you, my dear lady, ever trouble your head one whit regarding them? Of course not. How should they concern you? Some chronometers—like that of your medical man, for instance—are made for use; others, like that of the pretty trinket at your waist, for ornament chiefly. So long as each serves its turn, neither you nor Dr. Glibb, I think, will meddle with its interior. Similarly, honest John Thomas, of Bellevue Cottage, Hammersmith, who is coachman, groom, and gardener by turn, has evidently been destined by nature to make himself generally useful; while Mr. Chawles Plushington, who stands airing his calves under a certain porch in Eaton Square, may be regarded as a purely ornamental feature in your establishment. All this is the result of fate. But the private disposition of these gentlemen, the quality of their respective temperaments, the number

of their brothers and sisters, and, in short, their individual relations out of livery—are details which, confess now, have no interest for your ladyship. Indeed, in our present advanced and highly enlightened state of civilization it would be unreasonable to expect otherwise. But, as a pure matter of speculation, has it ever occurred to you what these humble retainers think of *you*? whether they may, perchance, have over the kitchen-fire, discussed *your* merits as a wife, a mother, the mistress of a household? The notion is an extravagant one, I admit, fraught with danger to, and subversive of the first interests of good SOCIETY; but, nevertheless, not altogether impossible. You remember, no doubt, that amusing story of your nursery days about a certain Palazzo of Truth, in which whoever spoke was, by an irresistible impulse, compelled to say just what he or she thought, neither more nor less. Conceive for an instant the effect of such an influence down-stairs and in your presence. What would they say?—good gracious! what might they not presume to say?—those cotton-velvet and bombazine-clad servitors, about those in authority over them—about you and me, for instance!

Place-aux-dames! Let us take the ladies first. There is Maria, your own maid, who, for a wage of some eighteen pounds a year, laces your corset, does your back-hair, selects your ball-dress (taking care, of course, that you don't appear twice during the season before the same people in the same costume), alters your bonnets of February to suit the requirements of March, and insists on your ordering another befitting the month of April; who brings that fragrant cup of tea to your bedside every morning; who knows where you keep the sal-volatile and kalydor, and with whom you condescend to chat a little as she unrobes you at three A.M. twice a week during the season. Ah! dear, good, patient Marial! sweet-spoken and sandy-haired sycophant! cease your kindly prattle about ribbons and bandoline, frizettes, Valenciennes, and sansflectum ju-

pons, and tell your mistress what you really think of her. She is young, pretty, and engaging: will you dare to say she is a giddy and affected flirt? She is middle-aged, wealthy, and well-born: but have you ever called her a patched-up, imperious, skinflint? I trow not. The smile with which you greet her has been assumed so long, and with such excellent effect; that rising indignation has been so studiously repressed; that unimpassioned deference has told so well in regard to vails and perquisites—that I sometimes fancy you deceive yourself among the rest of the world, and, for the time, actually imagine the middle-aged lady whom you make up for evening-parties, and take to pieces at two P.M., is a model of feminine perfection. Women, you see, are born actors: their most effective arts are so natural to them; their simplest natures often so graceful and artistic, that, from the humblest servant-maid to the most accomplished lady of the land, we can't easily distinguish, I believe, that it might not be always desirable to distinguish between what they really are and what they seem to be. In point of fact, I don't think they always know themselves.

But trusty John Thomas, and profusely-powdered Chawles, only hide their spleen, their indignation and contempt, in the presence of their betters. In the butler's pantry, at the ale-house round the corner, across the hammer-cloths of their respective chariots—sentiments are expressed which neither you nor I, dear Paterfamilias, could listen to unmoved. I know an old gentleman—an irascible old gentleman—who, standing by chance one afternoon inconveniently near the top of the kitchen-stairs, after summoning his brougham for the second time that day, heard a favourite footman exclaim to the confidential valet, 'I'm blest if that infernal old noosance ain't ordered out the carriage again!'

Now you know that was by no means a pleasant remark to reach one's ears in the decline of life, uttered by a paid lacquey, the but-

tons of whose very coat were adorned with the family crest; but I am not at all sure that the old gentleman to whom I refer was justified in the severe retaliation which he adopted. The wretched Jenkins (let us call him) was dismissed on the spot, and had nothing but a month's wages to console him in his adversity. The consequence was, no doubt, that he repaired to the Black Lion that evening, and entertained his liveried friends with a very disrespectful, if not perverted account of the affair. I dare say his late master became the laughing-stock of the bar-parlour; that his wig and wizened face, his goit and gaiters, his peppery disposition and general peculiarities were discussed in a manner which was anything but pleasant. Suppose, instead of taking so summary a revenge, he had retired to his study, swallowed a glass of Madeira, just to steady his nerves, rung the bell, and told Jenkins not to talk so loud down-stairs if he wished to keep his place. Can't you imagine how crestfallen the poor minion would have been? what an old trump the man he served must thenceforth be considered in his eyes; and with how much zeal he might have continued his service? But, 'who can be wise, amazed, temperate, and furious,' as the Thane of Cawdor once justly asked, 'in a moment?' No man. And upon my word, when one comes to think of it, the provocation was very great.

Personally, I must admit I have no great affection for the London flunkey of fashionable life. It is the most unfortunate stage of a manservant's career. As a page he may be slim and interesting. As a butler he may become stout and benevolent. But a great, broad-shouldered, black-whiskered fellow of six feet, who thrusts his brawny calves into pink silk stockings, plasters his hair with flour and pomatum, and covers himself with tags and gold lace, to hang on behind a carriage—bah! one fancies a man was made for some better business than this. It isn't his fault, no doubt, you will say. It is his betters who are to

blame: they rig him up in this ridiculous costume; they set him to do this senseless work; they conduct their households on such a plan that it is difficult for him to help being what he is—mean, idle, often insolent. There are, in short, some excuses for him. And so, no doubt, a good deal might be said in favour of the wasp (black and yellow, by-the-way, is the orthodox colour for modern livery waistcoats), but that would not lessen the annoyance of its sting. Your ornamental footman is an institution: but the institution is a bore, and it is not exactly easy to say why it has become so. Any of us who have

conned over, or seen enacted the comedies which were written at the close of the last century, can testify to the pleasant, affable character which the stage servant of that period assumed. His master joked with him, thrashed him, confided in him, called him 'knave' and 'rascal' by turns; and yet the poor fellow not only remained in his place, but stuck by the gallant captain through thick and thin; helped him in his little intrigues, bamboozled his creditors, rushed into all sorts of risks for his sake. Can this be said of any of our liveried retainers of the present day? Can we imagine Jeames or Chawles convey-



ing a *billet-doux*, with the slightest interest as to its success? standing meekly to receive our blows (clouded canes are gone out of fashion now)? scheming to get a dun out of the house; or even remaining a single day beneath the roof of a gentleman in urgent pecuniary difficulties? I say that type of retainer is obsolete. You can no more find it now than you can find a living specimen of the *dinornis* or *megatherium*. What! confide our *tendresses* to a fellow who blacks one's boots?—talk familiarly about debts and obligations to a man who stands behind your chair at dinner? Impossible! Why, the very next morning he would take

you by the button-hole and call you 'old cove.' The present state of society no longer admits of such relations.

Women, I expect, do occasionally lapse into confidences of this kind. How otherwise could Miss Gad-about, with whose family I am tolerably intimate, have been informed of the fact that Lady Flaring has not paid her milliner's bill for the last three years; or that Cornet Spanker, of the Blues, had been twice refused by the wealthy widow, Mrs. McChequers? These little scraps of domestic intelligence are surely picked up on the second floor, before the toilet-table, between lacing

and bandolining, late nocturnal soup and early morning Pekoe. Ah! ladies, ladies! if you would only be a little more discreet with your waiting-maids! If you would only remember that that dapper little creature who 'does' your back-hair, lugs out your ball-dress, selects your bracelets, ties your sash, twitches that bewitching skirt into shape, hands you your gloves, and scents that little scrap of cambric and lace which you carry with such a fascinating air—if you could only bring yourself to believe that your patient, useful, clever Abigail is—as great a gossip as yourself; that the harmless prattle with which you entertain her and indulge yourself,

will assuredly find its way downstairs into the servants'-hall, and be carried next day to the dainty ears of a dozen of your female friends (or enemies, as the case may be)—would you—could you be quite so frank in your revelations? Miss Papillon is a flirt, I grant you, and the manner in which she comported herself the other night before Lord Rattlegate was very far from correct. I am quite of your opinion, that, looking to Lady Screwwby's position in the world, and the amount of her fortune, she ought *not* to wear cleaned gloves. But then, my dear girls, if every detail of your conduct last season—if all the sacred mysteries of your toilet were openly



1. Onions! - 2. a goose! - 3. sage! 4. a gander!!
R 5. Some more onions -

discussed—which of the fairest of you would escape censure? I say nothing of Major Slingsby's attention to Miss Markham; nor of Miss Turnwell's amber-coloured silk *jupe*, over which that stupid footman spilt a strawberry ice last season, and which at least *some* of you recognised under a different hue this winter. I pass no comment on these things myself; I only beg of you to bear them in mind, and not to forget that what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander—although I am aware that those

delicious birds are not of the same sex.

It may be a morbid kind of curiosity, if you will, but I confess I do feel somewhat curious to know what forms the staple article of conversation round the kitchen-table; whether there is any standard of etiquette which regulates the social relations of this basement-story life; how much deference, for example, Mrs. Cook expects from the scullery-maid; what sort of attentions the parlour-maid may, with a due sense of propriety, receive from the but-

ler; whether the valet patronises or only tolerates the page, and so forth. I fancy that servants in a well-conducted household are great sticklers for decorum and the fitness of things in general. Observe the nice distinctions which they draw with regard to their respective duties, settling among themselves, by an inevitable code of rules, who is to do what work. If by accident, or in case of emergency, the housemaid is asked to wash down the doorstep, cook to lend a hand at bed-making, or John to dust his master's library, ten to one you hear of grumbling, and a talk of this or that not being his or her 'dooty.' So we may depend on it the social grades of life downstairs are jealously preserved, that the nursery-maid knows herself (as the phrase goes) better than to trespass on the prerogative of my lady's attendant, and the 'buttons' wouldn't go for to interfere with Mr. John Thomas's perquisites, no not for nothink.

Perquisites! Ah! then we come to a point on which I think there should be some better understanding between 'upstairs and down.' When I was a student at the Royal Academy, with a moderate allowance from the parental purse, I used to spend my Easter week at a friend's house in the country, where an establishment was kept on rather a large scale. My railway journey there and back, cab-fares, and other little incidental expenses cost me on those occasions perhaps somewhat more than I was justified in spending on such an excursion. But on leaving the house a tax awaited me which I really could not afford to pay, and yet from which no young gentleman with any sense of dignity could escape. My friend had a solemn butler—but of livery of course—with a bald head and an air of such tremendous importance that one instinctively felt (at least I did) how delicate a task it was to offer him any gratuity at all, and how utterly impossible it would have been to offer him anything less than gold without positively insulting him. The same argument applied with equal reason to the housekeeper, a

demure-looking personage, who had breakfast served in her own room, and whom the other servants addressed as 'mum.' Then there was my friend's valet, who condescended to bring me my shaving-water in the morning and laid out my dress-coat before dinner. There was another gentleman in livery who during that repast came frequently to me with offers of a 'little sherry, sir, little 'ock, sir,' and so forth. Finally there were the groom who brought round our horses to the door, the gardener who had always some trifle to offer in the shape of fruit or vegetables as I was leaving (no doubt they thought, or pretended to think, that I had a house and *cuisine* of my own in town, whereas I lived in Bloomsbury lodgings, and my usual dinner consisted of a couple of chops), and the lodge-keeper, who touched his hat whenever I entered or left the grounds. All these functionaries had, in turn, to be fed, and by the time their vails had been duly dispensed I was generally minus the best half of my last 5*l.* note. Now it seems to me that this system of servant-tipping requires revision. It falls rather hard on our young friends and poor relations—guests whose purses are slender—whose wallets are not amply stored. It makes John Thomas (whose calling, as I have shown, has from other causes already degenerated) mean and calculating; it leads him to look askance at every visitor to his master's house, and calculate his welcome in *£. s. d.* There is M'Chromer's housemaid, for instance, who used to smile and drop me the neatest little curtseys you ever saw whenever I called on her master. The angelic behaviour of that girl, the modest neatness of her white aprons, the tidy coquetry of her caps, the arch simplicity of her manner—she was only seventeen—completely won my heart. I don't mind admitting it now, for she has been married for some years to the grocer's young man, and they have since set up in that line for themselves. Well, in an evil moment I—don't be frightened, ladies, I have the very strictest sense of

propriety—I took to giving this young woman small gratuities, for example, when she occasionally helped me on with my great-coat, half a crown; when she called a cab for me, half a crown; when she took charge of my Scotch terrier in the kitchen one morning (Mrs. Mac couldn't bear dogs), two-and-six, and so forth. One day my host found me out in my well-meant indiscretion, and being of an eccentric turn of humour, rated me in his

own ironical way. 'My dear fellow,' said he, 'don't let me see you do that again. I pay that girl ample wages; if they are not high enough she can ask for more, and if she deserves 'em she shall have 'em. But meanwhile I don't see why, as my guest, you should requite her for my hospitality, such as it is. If that half-crown is an acknowledgment for the dinner which you have just eaten, *meis sumptibus*, give it to me and not to my housemaid. If



you think your entertainment here deserves some recognition at your hands, present me, at the close of every year, with a gold pencil-case, or what you will. Personally, I should hardly have considered that any such *honorarium* was necessary, but if it must be given, it is clearly I who should be the recipient.'

The result of this tremendous chaff (the drift of which I well understood, for M'Chromer's own

generosity knew no bounds) was that Miss Susan's half-crowns were cut off, at least as far as I was concerned. Except at Christmas—which, you know, only comes once a year, and, regarded purely from a financial point of view, once is quite enough, in my opinion—that bewitching creature did not add sixpence more to her wages out of my pockets. It may have been owing to her master's cruel interference

with her perquisites in this and other instances that she united herself at a month's warning with Mr. Spicely; or it may have been that youth's ardent devotion which caused her to take so precipitate a step. On that point it is not necessary for me to record an opinion. All I know is that I had from that day forth no more smiles, no more curtsies, no more inquiries after the health of my Skye terrier. I called my own cats, pulled on my own great-coat, shut the front door in Gower Street with my own hands, and have been very suspicious of ancillary blandishments ever since.

There are two sides, however, to every question, and lest I should for an instant be supposed to defend stinginess to servants, let me here protest that I consider no kind of shabbiness more mean, no frugality more ill advised, no providence more wasteful than that which in any household is enjoined alone downstairs. 'A fat kitchen and a lean parlour' was a homely proverb once in vogue, and certainly if both cannot be well fed it must be a miserable sort of thriftiness which would begin by starving the basement story. Yet I have heard of respectable, well-bred housewives who ration their servants like union paupers, who cut down their daily food to a minimum, who consider a half-pint of small beer an amply-sufficient stimulant for an able-bodied, hard-working cook, and who regard the bare mention of meat suppers in the kitchen as flat heresy. There is something half-ludicrous, half-contemptible in this penny-wise economy. Upstairs and before her guests we have madame doing the honours of her table—a table crowded with needless delicacies—soups, entremets, game, pâtés, dessert, delicately-named wines (I say nothing of the quality), and what not. Could we foresee our hostess as she will probably appear next morning, marshalling the fragments of this gorgeous banquet in her bleak larder, taking stock of half-consumed chicken and segments of raised pie, counting the forcement-balls which adorned that dish of jugged hare,

noting with a scrupulous eye the mortal remains of a beloved turkey, which of us would enjoy his dinner? Such relics may indeed worthily supply the family table for some days to come, but while all this feasting has been going on upstairs, how have the servants fared? 'What! *that* all of the shoulder of mutton which was ordered a week ago? Impossible! Those custards eaten because they wouldn't keep another day? Absurd! I am convinced that a *whole* leg of pheasant, and *not* a drumstick only, was sent down last night, and what presumption to eat game in the kitchen! Ah, my dear Materfamilias, would you muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn? Enough may not be always as good as a feast, but let us at least have enough in the servants' hall before we attempt feasting in the dining-room. The reverse of this rule represents not only a moral wrong but a financial mistake. Hungry servants must eat, whether they confess to the weakness or not. A good slice off the joint will satisfy their appetites as well as a series of oyster-patties, but if they are debarred from the first, can you be surprised at their making free with the other? Good servants, who wish (in downstairs language) to 'better themselves,' and who want a fair character for their next place, never remonstrate with these petty exactions. Besides, the icy reserve and conventional propriety which is kept up (perhaps necessarily in this country) between man and master, maid and mistress, make it impossible to do so openly. But if this traditional gag were just for a day removed from the lips of honest John Thomas and Betsey Jane, my goodness! what a shout of derision would rise from the areas of Mayfair, with what loud bursts of vulgar indignation Belgravian basements would ring! I remember a famous back number of 'Punch,' in which there appeared, I think from the vigorous pencil of Leech, a sketch of some middle-aged nobleman who, thrusting his head out of a natty little brougham in an April shower, ordered his coachman and

footman to give him their hats inside immediately, because they were new and would be spoiled by the rain. People laughed at this caricature, and accepting the spirit of the satire, no doubt put down the incident itself as a pure invention. It may indeed have been so, but not long afterwards I heard the following anecdote from a friend on whose accuracy I can rely, and I should not be surprised if the sketch and the story had some common and substantial origin.

The head of an illustrious house, whom I shall call Lord Skinflint, had given one of his cast-off hats to a certain lacquey in his service. Recognizing this hat a few days afterwards on the hall-table, where it had been left for the moment, my lord inquired to whom it belonged, and was at once reminded of his gift.

'What!' cried his lordship, 'did I give you such a good hat as this?'

The man explained that he had had it relined and 'done up.'

'Umph!' says my lord, 'I never thought of that. Pray, what did you pay for it?'

'Ari-a-crown, my lord,' answers Mr. Jeames.

The nobleman mused for an instant, and looked at the hat again. 'I'll tell you what,' said he, at length, 'I'll give you five shillings for it as it is.'

'If your lordship pleases,' answered the footman. (In fact there was nothing else for him to say.)

The bargain was struck at once. Lord Skinflint put on the hat, and, for aught I know, he may wear it still.

Well, I won't moralize on this story, for despite my friend's proverbial accuracy, it is just possible that he may have been misinformed; that the anecdote is what the Italians call *ben trovato*, or, in plain English, that there is not a single word of truth in it. But I confess that to me it does not seem so highly improbable, and, I will candidly add, similar gossip has led me to believe that there is not unfrequently in 'high life' a great deal that might

be contemplated with advantage by philosophers below stairs. Do the philosophers avail themselves of this teaching? I fear not. Jeames and Chawles, Susan and Betty imitate the foibles no less than the virtues of their betters. We all admit and deplore that spirit of funkeydom which pervades certain phases of English Society, which sets half our dear fellow-countrymen truckling to a man who has a handle to his name, or, worse still, to another who is known to possess a large fortune. After this can you sneer at the mixture of sham deference and twopenny dignity of the servant who wears, for your sake, a cockade, tags, powder, and heraldic buttons? I think it is a mistake to suppose that servants despise and groan under these insignia of office. My own opinion is, that if livery went out of fashion for footmen, butlers would at once petition to wear it. A due and palpable distinction between the two places must be kept up, or the kitchen would be in a state of anarchy. What! a drab coat or a striped vest the badge of slavery? The badge of fiddlesticks! A domestic servant is not more rigidly tied to his duties than a soldier, or a government-office clerk, or a barrister, or a poor curate, who is often harder worked than a London footman, and not nearly so well remunerated. We don't call a red jacket, or a tie-wig, or a stuff gown the badge of slavery: why should an honest suit of livery be so stigmatized? Prate as they will about their free-born rights and privileges, servants are the first to respect these relics of ancient feudalism. Not long ago a cook who was out of a situation asked a lady to assist her in getting one. Before long, a place was found, and a consultation held on the subject.

'Pray mum,' asked Mrs. Cook, 'does the family 'ave cresses?'

'Water-cresses for breakfast? I'm sure I don't know,' answered her kind patron, 'but what can it signify?'

'Excuse me, mum,' interposed the applicant, 'I don't think I make myself understood. I mean cresses

on their carriage, note-paper, liv'ry, and cetera—'

'Oh! armorial bearings, you mean?' said the lady. 'I really cannot tell you.'

'Because 'm, I reely couldn't undertake a situation where there wasn't a cress kept. You see, ev'ry genteel fam'ly 'as a cress; and——'

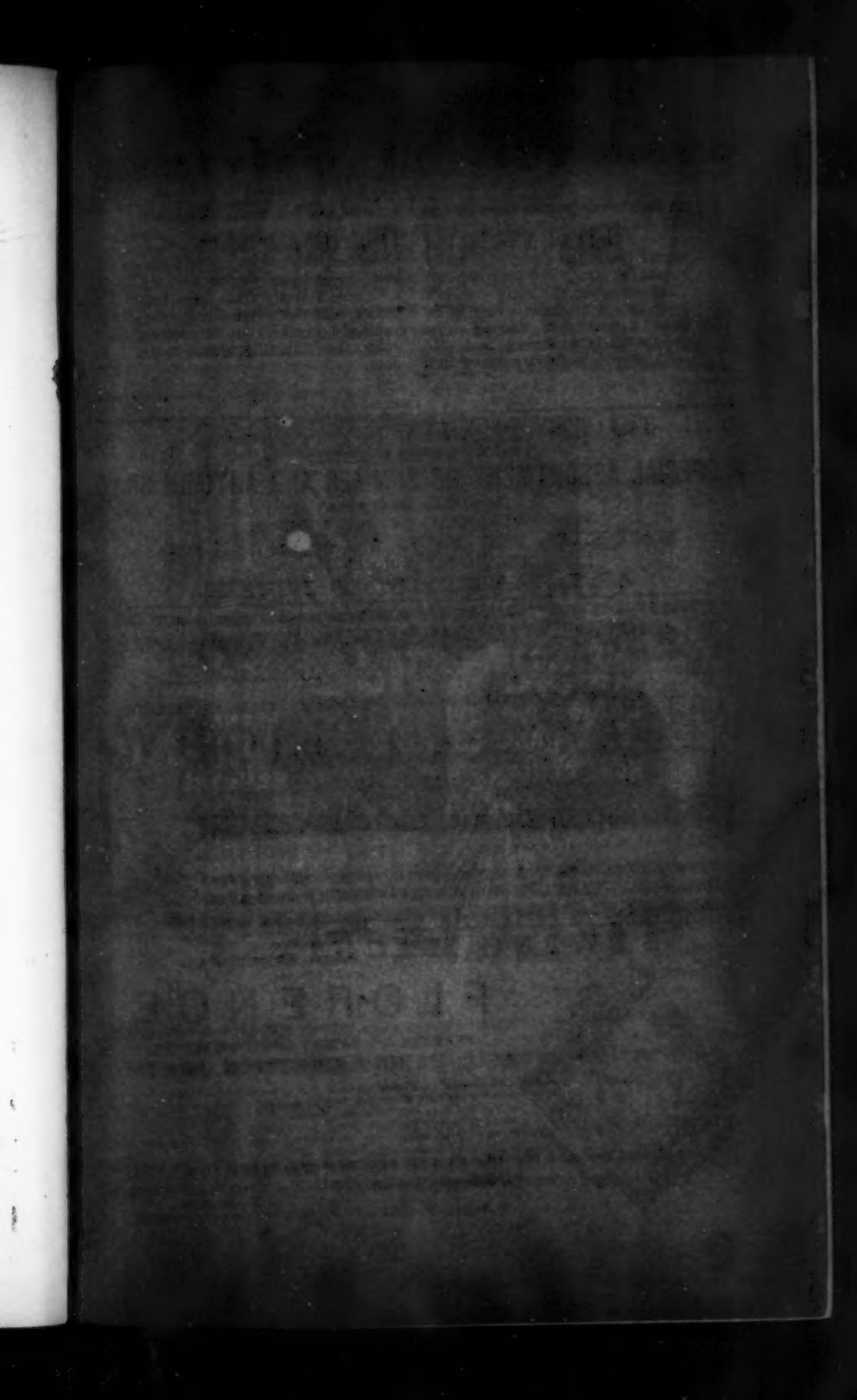
'And you positively make that

a condition?' asked the lady, quietly.

'Sutt'nly, mum,' says Mrs. Cook. 'Footman kep; washing put out; beer, tea, and fam'ly cress.'

'Then, I really think, Mrs. Culender,' said the lady, smiling, 'that you had better look out for yourself. John, show this silly woman to the door.'







THE ROOM NEXT THE BOUDOIR

Painted by G. T. Foxall

LONDON SOCIETY.

SEPTEMBER, 1867.

ON THE WAY HOME FROM THE PARIS EXHIBITION.



IT is interesting to note now and then what strange coincidences occur in life, especially if you take the trouble to give chance a helping hand.

I had turned my back on Paris on one of those semi-direct trains which are so convenient and are, unfortunately, so few, namely in 17 of the *Indicateur des Chemins de Fer*, which leaves the capital of France at noon, and reaches the port whose name was written on Queen Mary's heart at 7.10 in the evening. I had arrived in Paris at the same time with certain acquaintances, and now

I had secured a second-class compartment. I had the very same ladies with me. Curious freak of destiny, so easily induced to grant us what a favourable moment!

On looking round I beheld with me, amongst my friends, Mr. & Mrs. Jones, and Messrs. Griffin, busy people in a large way of business. I am not bound to say in what way. Besides them were Mr. and Mrs. Bullock, who live on their property in a suburban villa; Messrs. Morton, teacher of French and drawing, the mildest of men; and Mr. Spinks, a junior partner in a